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Hot Chip by Marcus Jackson



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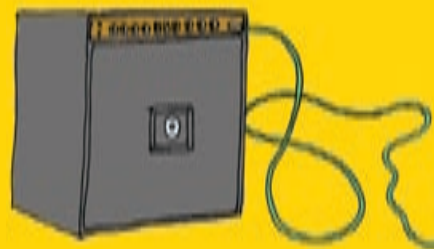
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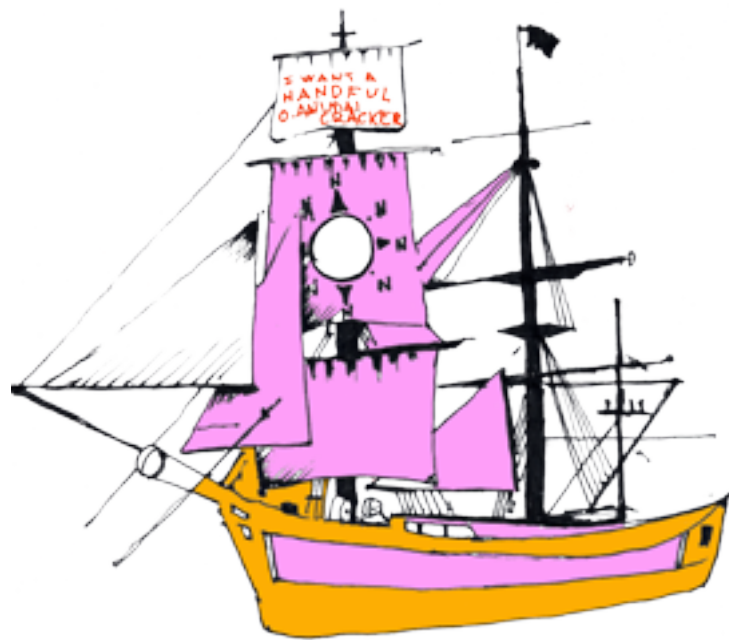
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ED'S RANT WHAT IT DO?



It's hard to write about this issue because I don't even know what it's about myself. British art school students bumping Yo La Tengo, jocking Justin Timberlake and fantasizing about Escalades? An industrial head who churns out grimy, blood-and-machine-soaked dancehall? Rocker boys in Bologna? A Philly/Baltimore collective dropping the entire East Coast downlow?

This time around I'm piloting the ship with no map, and it is rather fun. Unfortunately, the "music industry" doesn't always share my enthusiasm. PR people get antsy when I don't sync all of *XLR8R*'s stories to when artist albums come out—silly me, assuming you might rather hear about things before everyone else, not after the fact. Other artists in this issue—urban soul songstress Eska, new school ragga don Debaser—don't even have a full-length out yet; following the logic of most magazines, they probably wouldn't even be allowed to do guest reviews if there was no label backing them.

At the same time, I see a lot more magazine covers than I'd like pushing this season's crop of "superstar DJs"—some of whom are nothing more than human jukeboxes playing mainstream hits. This makes me glad we've decided to run with the band Hot Chip instead: they're new, they're interesting and their remixes for the likes of Ladytron, Scissor Sisters, The Go! Team and Architecture in Helsinki definitely go bang.

Not having a map is sometimes the best way to travel. As a friend remarked to me the other night—while a DJ played another predictably smooth techno set—electronic music is perhaps too self-aware these days, its course too charted. "[When I watch people play live or DJ], I find myself wishing for things to go wrong," he said. "Like, I wish this guy would just hit the record right now, or pick up a mic and say something, or some glitch would happen." It's kind of true. When you think of the most dynamic performers, they're always the ones that aren't afraid to take risks. And after about 15 years of listening to electronic music, early rave's ideal of the "faceless DJ" is just a romantic notion of the past to me—I now expect performers to show some personality while they're playing, as long as it's not totally contrived.

Come to think of it, I guess this issue does have a theme—it's about what's exciting to us now, from Hot Chip and Spankrock's fun live shows to Phuturistix's bassline-driven take on new soul to Bay Area slang to exciting artwork from Amsterdam's Parra and Ohio's Sans Nom—the moniker of Toledo's Upso and his wife Jemma, who did the wickedly animated fonts that frolic all over this issue. Excuse me now, I have to go hoist the Jolly Roger...
- Vivian Host, Editor

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ON THE COVER: Hot Chip photographed by Marcus Clackson; design by Sans Nom

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Derek Beres has written about global music for dozens of publications. His first book, *Global Beat Fusion*, about the new world mythology being created by international electronica, was published in June 2005. He DJs and produces records as part of NYC's GlobeSonic Sound System, as well as teaching 13 Vinyasa yoga classes weekly. He is hard at work on his first novel, *Mysterious Distance*.

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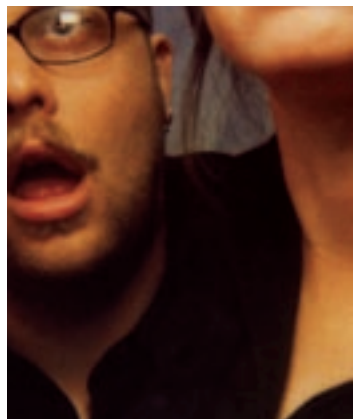
MATT EARP

A blogger and a DJ, Matt Earp (a.k.a. Kid Kameleon) is now living in the Bay Area by way of New York, where he worked covert aural ops with the Soundlab crew. He's a musical *impurist*, dedicated to promoting real underground sounds like ragga jungle, grime/dubstep, breakcore and all Jamaican-influenced musics that are broken and hard to classify. Much of his spare time goes to his Steely Dan weakness, writing for www.kidkameleon.com and www.riddimmethod.net and playing with Riddim the cat.



JENNIFER MARSTON

Jennifer Marston is crazy enough to think she can balance *XLR8R's* marketing, distribution, licensing and office supply orders single-handedly, which may explain her penchant for chain smoking and triple-shot americanos. When she's not licensing music to videogames and coordinating events, she can be found stealing other people's whiskey and composing lyrical ballads about her fellow staff members that she plans to use as eventual blackmail on certain creative directors who insist on calling her 'Of' Feed Me.



SANS NOM

Sans Nom is the design studio of Dustin Amery Hostetler (www.upso.org) and Jemma Hostetler née Gura (www.prate.com). Together they art direct, design and offer creative consultation across disciplines such as product design, branding, illustration, interactive and cream sauces. Check their cover treatment and all the features in this issue!

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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interface and my laptop with Ableton Live I feel like a Superman on the decks. Thanks for the best mag out there and keep up the good work.

Jesse Roberts a.k.a. DJ Keta
Boscawen, New Hampshire

Salsa Love

Brianna, as art director, I'm assuming you're responsible for the *flavorful* Flavor Unit layout (XLR8R #92). The nachos are so cute! Omega One reminds me of a taco I once ate. Sleeper & ID look so cozy tucked into an enchilada bed! And the burrito is definitely my favorite—it says, "Ba-bam! I'm a Brown burrito! *Booyah!*" Mucho, mucho gracias!

Luv,
Marisa, Los Angeles

Brianna Responds:

Querida Marisa,
Que suave que le gusto el *layout*. Era un sueño mío realizado, combinando las tres cosas mas amadas en mi vida—comida mexicana, hip-hop y tontos trucos del Photoshop, todo de parte del sudor de David Clark.

Quick Facts

I'd like to know which month Issue 47 of your magazine was released; the issue with Boards of Canada in it. It isn't on your [online] magazine archive; that archive only goes back to issue 56.

Thanks in advance,
Fredd

Tomas Responds:

And the answer is...March 2001! When people ask about that particular issue, I normally send them to eBay. Issue #47 is the most traded and sought after back issue as far as we can tell, with #55 (Aphex Twin) and #52 (Stacey Pullen) as the next most valuable. Believe it or not, many of these back issues are completely sold out, so if you have some of the "oldies" they could turn into a tidy retirement fund!

Corrections: On the first page of issue #92's fashion shoot, "Nouveau Riche," Lisa's cape and Tuan's parka are both by Spiewak. The shoot was in New Jersey; hair and make-up were done by Jennifer Brent.

Unscripted Praise

I've been reading your magazine for about three years now and I have to say it's my favorite and definitely the best DJ magazine out there. Your mag is the reason I bought my Allen & Heath Xone 92 mixer, which I wouldn't trade for anything. With the MIDI

XLR8R'S "REV UP THE NEW YEAR" CONTEST

Win amazing gear from Roland, Ultrasonex, Astralwerks and Greensleeves.

Most people thought life in general was pretty lame in 2005. Surely music was good, but wars, hurricanes and a bad economy didn't help matters. So here's XLR8R's effort to get '06 off on the right foot—giving you all the tools to make, listen to and enjoy new sounds. Simply answer the questions below and you could win a **Roland SP-404** portable mini sampler, awesome **Ultrasonex DJ1** headphones, an album from our cover stars **Hot Chip** or a two-disc reggae extravaganza from **Greensleeves**. Roland's amazing new SP-404 sampler received our highest praise in issue #92 (2005 Music Technology Special) due to its easy sampling abilities (from CD, mic or MP3 player). With its great effects (echo, flange, overdrive, multi-effects) and battery-powered option, it's truly an instantaneous sampler for musicians on the go. Ultrasonex's comfortable, foldable headphones are designed for DJs that need loud, clear monitoring, plus they're lightweight and come with a gold-plated jack. We sing the praises of Hot Chip in this issue; win their damn funky and innovative debut album, *Coming On Strong*—released in the US on **Astralwerks**—here. You can also pick up **The Biggest Reggae One Drop Anthems 2005**, Greensleeves' comprehensive two-disc roots dancehall set, featuring 40 tracks by Jah Cure, Fantan Mojah, Gyptian, Sizzla and more. To win, answer these questions:

- 1) What is the PhD-inspired nickname of the SP-303 (Roland SP-404's older sibling)?
- 2) How many members play in Hot Chip's live band?
- 3) What is reggae artist Jah Cure's unfortunate present living quarters?
- 4) How many different lines of headphones does Ultrasonex offer (hint, it's a number between one and six)?

One Grand Prize winner will receive: A Roland SP-404 mini-sampling unit, Ultrasonex DJ Headphones, and copies of Hot Chip's *Coming On Strong* and *One Drop Anthems 2-CD* set.
Three Runners Up will receive: Hot Chip's *Coming On Strong* CD and the *One Drop Anthems 2-CD* set.

Entries will be accepted via mail and email. Entries must be received by Feb 17, 2006. Send your answers to XLR8R's "Rev Up The New Year Contest", 1388 Haight St. #105, San Francisco, CA 94117 or email contest@xlr8r.com with "Rev Up The New Year Contest" in the subject line.
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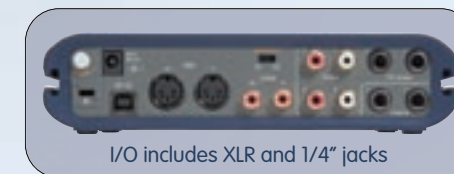


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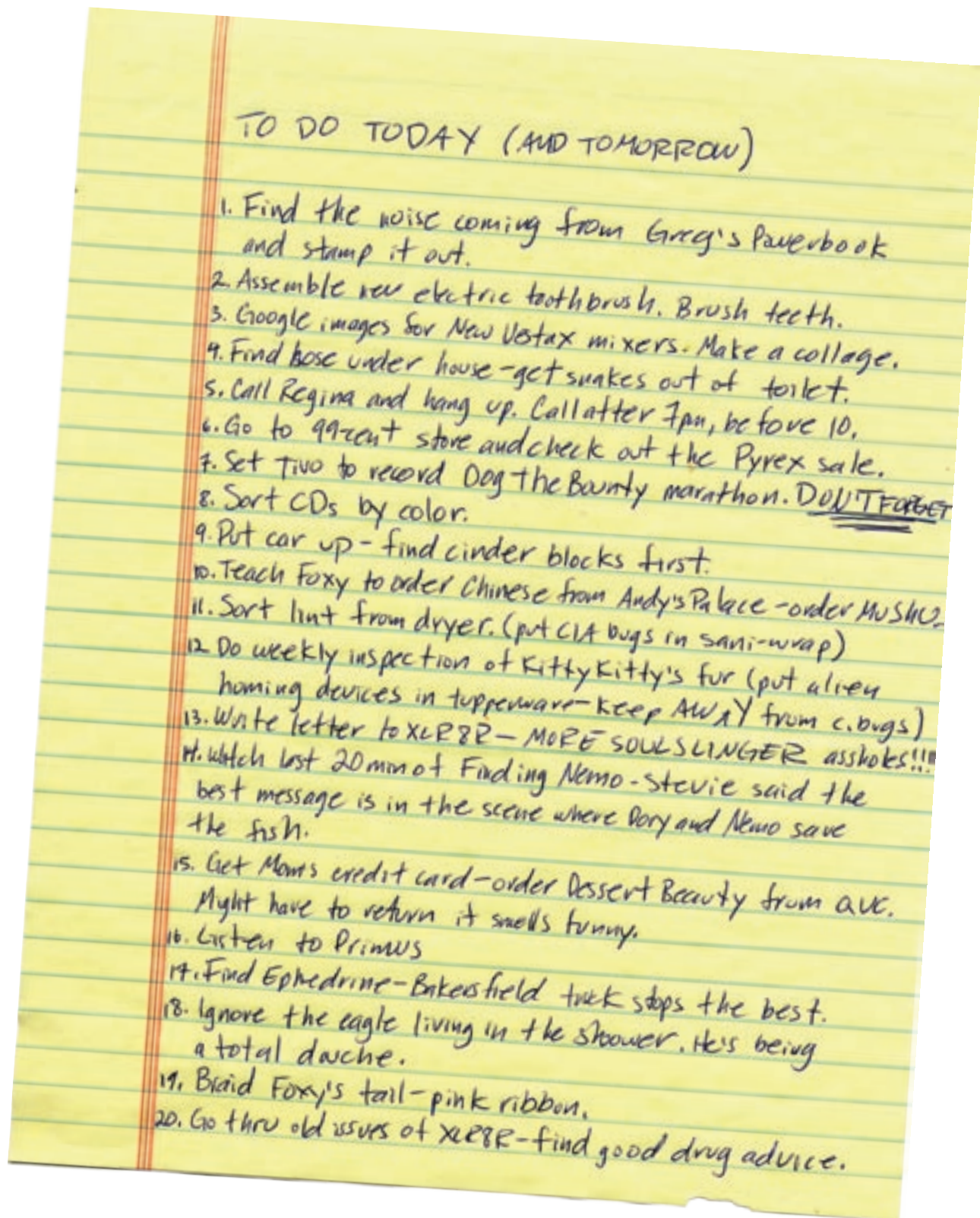
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BJ "BITTER" BASTARD'S TWEAKER TO-DO LIST

Last month, BJ "Bitter" Bastard was scouring the Imperial Valley desert for sacred cactuses and abandoned pools to skate when this note blew across the path in a huff of beige dust. Picking up the crumpled piece of notebook paper—which appeared to have been torn out of a Trapper Keeper—Bastard noticed it was a tweaker's to-do list, the likes of which had not been seen since the "scene died." After BJ snorted all the white dust off it—which turned out to be sand particles—it was given to us to reprint.



Awkward dining with Adult., gay men fantasizing about straight life, Mu acting a fool,

animated synchronized skiing, Why? flying through the air with a cardboard dog,



Tortoise getting pelted with pencils and balls, fat dudes playing belly-pong with meatballs,

Postal Service performing with astronauts, El-P at gunpoint, J-Dilla serenading chubby strippers



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DEBASER

RAGGA JUNGLE FILLS THIS TORONTO PRODUCER'S DUBPLATE ARSENAL.

WORDS: MATT EARP PHOTO: THOM HAMILTON

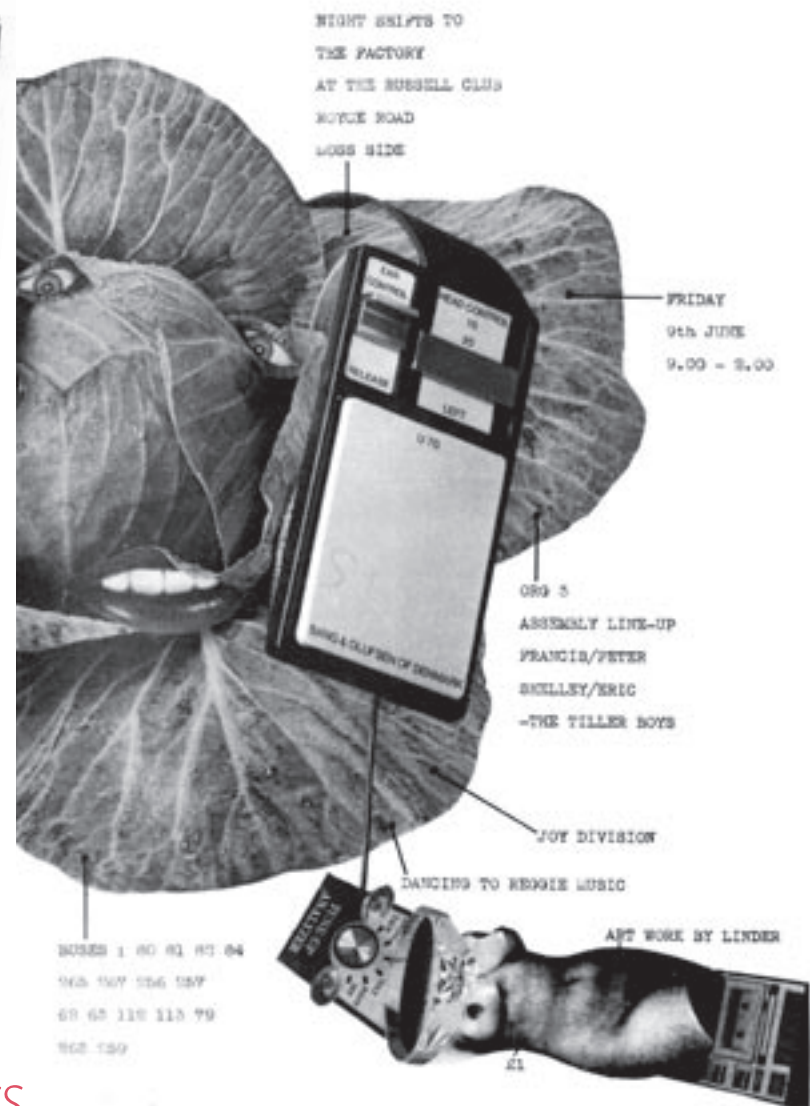
As jungle grew darker and more streamlined, it left behind '93 and '94's cut-up amens, bubblin' basslines and shouts of "*Bloodclaat!*" from MCs like Top Cat. But a group of dedicated junglists held fast to the old-school formula; by 2003, a whole crop of new, non-UK-based producers had surfaced to update the ragga sound. That was the same year Debaser launched his label Press Up Records with "My Sound Rule" and "Get Red." Two-and-a-half years later, he's twelve releases deep and boasts two other crushing sub-labels (New Lick and Jungle Royale).

Debaser (a.k.a. Tyler Grant) started DJing at the age of 16 in his hometown of Toronto, which (in addition to boasting a large Jamaican population) was the epicenter of the North American jungle scene in the late '90s. (It's no surprise that many of the new ragga jungle producers—Krinjah, Sixteenarmjack and Rhygin—all spent time there.) He's since moved on to making universally high quality tunes that mix well-known vocals from established and upcoming dancehall artists with clean basslines and crisp, almost icy drum programming.

Recently, much of Grant's energy has gone into Jungle Royale, a label dedicated to irie skankin' tunes, an anomaly in a genre that follows soundclash culture with rampant enthusiasm. Jungle Royale releases feature original vocals from Demolition Man, Future Troubles, Willi Williams and Jimmy Riley among others. One side is the Debaser mix while the flipside features remixes from new ragga producers like Tester, U-Ome and RCola. Jungle Royale 05, a massive remix by Division One of Johnny Osbourne's "Salute the Don," has found its way back across the Atlantic and into the crates of top-flight traditional d&b jocks including Hype, Zinc, Bailey and Pendulum.

Not one to rest on his laurels, Debaser also runs the foremost jungle online store (www.ragga-jungle.com) and has produced tunes for the Mashit, Zion's Gate and Nuff Styles labels—all while financially supporting himself as a full-time mechanical designer/engineer. He'll also be releasing a mix CD of his back catalog and a full-length Jungle Royale album (featuring past releases and new material) later this year. Truly, this young dub analyzer is poised to kill sound the world round.

www.pressuprecords.com



Shown above: poster art from post-punk live shows, 1976-77 (artwork by Linder) and book cover

BEAUTIFUL MESS

Simon Reynolds' new book glues together the glittering shards of post-punk.

Post-punk is a messy movement, if you can even call it that. And despite reissues by Acute, ZE and Rough Trade, all but the most die-hard trainspotters have a tough time getting a handle on where this genre of loosely-tethered bands and obscure b-sides begins and ends. With *Rip It Up and Start Again* (softcover; Penguin, \$16), author Simon Reynolds (of *Generation Ecstasy* fame) connects the neurons between No Wave, New Wave, industrial and art punk over 399 pages of illuminating prose, breathing life and context into otherwise brittle vinyl. Three years and 125 revelatory interviews later—and with the US version of the book about to be released February 28—we asked Reynolds for a few thoughts. *Vivian Host*

www.simonreynolds.net

What's one of your favorite memories of an early encounter with post-punk?

Hearing tracks from The Slits album *Cut* for the first time on John Peel's BBC radio show. I was 16, on vacation at my aunt's in the rural north of England, and they had this tiny, crappy transistor radio, which made the songs from *Cut* sound wonderfully eerie, like this scratchy toy music from another planet. They also just sounded incongruous, being very much London inner-city music, and I was hearing them in the midst of this wild, mountainous area called the Yorkshire Dales.

Name three songs you feel are most indicative of post-punk's overall aesthetic.

Post-punk is so stylistically diverse it's hard to pick just three, but The Slits' "So Tough" captures the exuberance and do-it-yourself glee of post-punk, Public Image Ltd's "No Birds Do Sing" is more angsty and avant-garde, while eerily beautiful, and Talking Heads' "Seen and Not Seen" represents that whole other side of the music that's ethereal, dream-like and shimmeringly textured. Without being abrasive or atonal, that track is about as distant from conventional rock 'n' roll as anyone in post-punk got.





FRANCK ROGER

AN ARTISTIC PARISIAN HOUSE PRODUCER GETS A BOOST FROM THE WEST COAST.

WORDS: PETER NICHOLSON PHOTO: ALIX ALVAREZ

Paris really was burning in November...with the real fires of rioting immigrants. But no matter how hot things actually get, Parisian producer and DJ Franck Roger keeps it cool with his own take on deep house. "I grew up with all kinds of music, and I realized that house music is the perfect mix between soul music, disco and Latin jazz," recounted Roger via email the same week that France was filled with unrest. If only everyone would keep their mind as open as Roger's, who even cites Cuban percussionist Mongo Santamaria as one of his influences.

Roger got his start with releases for Parisian deep house label Straight Up Records, teaming up with DJ Roy and frequent collaborator M'Selem on keyboards in 2001 for "Delight." More Straight Up singles followed, as well as efforts for other French labels like Bettino's Record Shop and Versatile, but it wasn't long before he began being noticed outside France, recording for Germany's Needs, Kenlou in the US and Crash in Canada.

California is Roger's latest destination, with a mix album of his own productions titled *We Walk To Dance* on Jamie Thinnes' Seasons imprint out now. The mix is similar to the *In My Mind* LP he recorded for Straight Up at the beginning of last year, but with a more refined mood that slowly evolves. Roger's palette is full of timeless house cuts like "N.J. Track," whose title and pumping organ pay homage to the roots of garage without sounding retro.

Though he claims varied influences and inspirations, Roger's sound is classic house on the garage side, with simple but elegant production, impeccable drum programming and plenty of 4 a.m. keys, often topped by soulful singing.

The key to those vocal excursions is Chris Wonder, who has sang on Roger's biggest records, including "If I" (Sunnyside) and "No More Believe" (Kenlou) as well as his new single for Seasons, "Me Myself & I." "[Chris and I] met about four years ago and talked about our musical influences. He's from the French R&B scene and has many different black music influences, and we continue to exchange our ideas in the studio," Roger exclaimed with typically Gallic enthusiasm. With an exceptionally uplifting feel and classic flair, Roger's penchant for deep grooves and lasting collaborations offers hope that, even in troubled times, cooler vibes will prevail.

Franck Roger's *We Walk to Dance* album is out now on Seasons Unlimited. www.seasonsrecordings.com

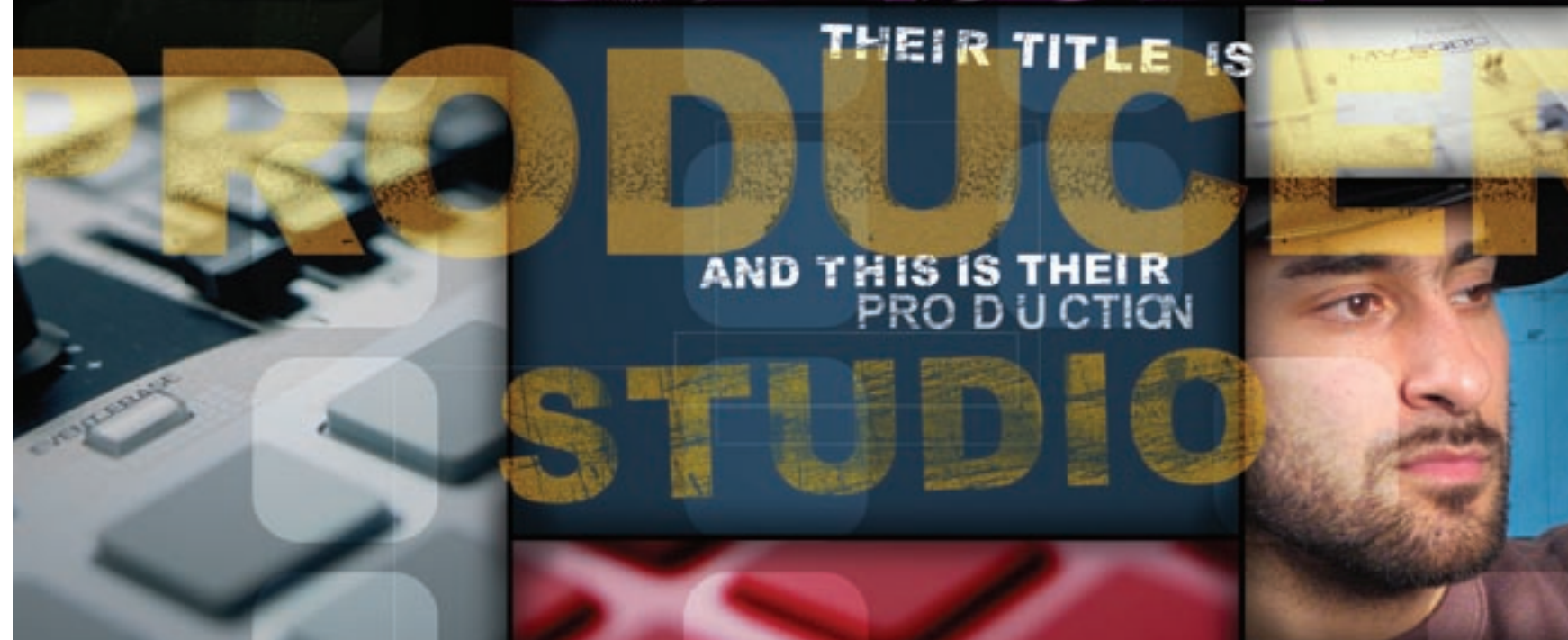
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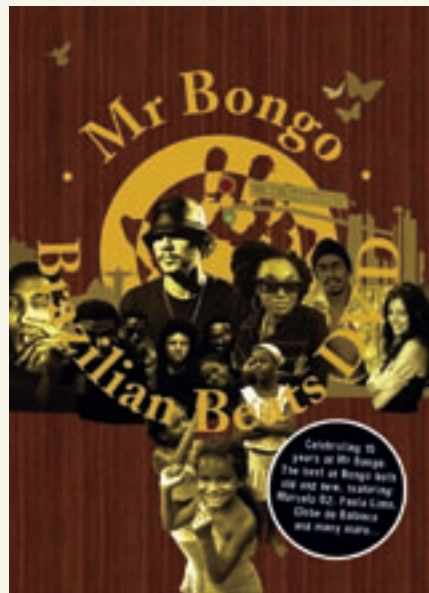
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GONE SOUTH

Mr. Bongo transports Brazilian beats to US shores.

With Brazilian music receiving so much attention in America (Virgin Megastore now has an entire area devoted to it), the time is prime for the UK-based Mr. Bongo to launch itself into the US spotlight. With an array of projects—Brazilian rapper Marcelo D2, AfrobeatSmiths Bukky Leo & Black Egypt, Afro-Cubanites Afolima and The Mothers (a remix project devoted to poor health conditions in South Africa)—Mr. Bongo is as much a socially conscious vehicle as it is a stellar record label. Credit founder David Buttle, who became inspired after a trip to El Salvador in 1994. “There is so much good music in Brazil that people can relate to despite not understanding a word,” he explains.

Buttle recently released *Brazilian Beats* (Mr. Bongo, \$19.99), a DVD marking 15 years of the label. Featuring documentaries on Marcelo D2 and the Street Angels project—an urban social group that originally inspired Buttle—as well as videos and a discography, it’s a great introduction to Mr. Bongo’s vast repertoire. “The US is a difficult market at any time for a small label to embark on,” Buttle says. “But I just feel that some of our artists are in the right place to break there.” *Derek Beres*
www.mrbongo.com



Dominik Eulberg

KETAMINE HOUSE

Sinking into the new black hole of minimal.

Techno’s latest sub-genre is as unstable as the sounds being used to make it, and already people are arguing over a name for it. As usual, it began on the internet, and in a flash: with the flick of a gated hi-hat, a new phrase—intended to describe the psychedelic minimalism of artists like Ricardo Villalobos, Dominik Eulberg and Trentemøller—appeared on the popular I Love Music boards, then in the *Village Voice* and a certain monthly column on Pitchfork: “ketamine house.” Nobody likes the name, but then nobody’s figured out anything else to call it, or even what “it” really is, aside from **minimal techno’s renewed interest in going quietly bonkers**. For starters, ketamine house has about as much to do with the drug, aside from its anecdotal rise in Berlin’s club scene, as acid house did with its eponymous substance. But like Simon Reynolds’ “heroin house”—meant to describe Chain Reaction’s languid, horizontal sprawl—the term evokes the music’s psychotropic state, in which hard-panned effects, illusory repetition and Moebius-like morphology send time and space spiraling into oblivion. The phrase itself seems unlikely to stick, but in a scene where afterparties run for days, it seems likely that the bloggers will beat the punters to the punch in affixing the final label.

Philip Sherburne



SERVICES

DISRUPTION AND DESTRUCTION DRIVE NEW YORK’S METAL DECONSTRUCTIONISTS.

WORDS: ALEXANDER POSELL PHOTO: DANIEL HAKANSSON

Tristan Bechet and Christopher Pravdica are Services, a band quite unlike what you might have heard before. Formed out of the ashes of well-known noise rock/wall-of-sound outfit Flux Information Sciences (Young God Records), the duo’s staggeringly loud live shows assault the senses with a tower of discordant noise and distorted rhythm. How does a band comprised of only two people produce such a maddening amount of sound? The secret lies in a discovery made one day by Bechet, experimenting in the studio.

“I was just messing around, doing some cut-and-paste with heavy metal samples, when I decided to just fucking Turn. It. Up. And all of a sudden it was like *Nahnahnahn!* and I said, ‘Man! That’s all you need!’” One energized phone call to Pravdica later, and a new project was born.

From this early catalyst of chopped-up metal samples and sparse drum machine patterns, Bechet’s forceful vocals were added (along with some manic cymbal crashing), resulting in an outlandish, yet strangely familiar, cacophony. Like a new recipe made from commonplace ingredients, the formula worked well enough to catch the ears of successful NYC dance imprint A Touch of Class, who, still reeling from the success of the Scissor Sisters, were looking for “something different” to take the label in a new direction.

And find it they did. After seeing Services perform live, ATOC approached the pair about releasing an album, resulting in the demonic

full-length *Your Desire is My Business*. An ensuing European tour was, by all accounts, a smashing success, utilizing the now-ubiquitous blueprint of DJ set/band set/DJ set, and the partnership has only blossomed from there.

The pairing of Touch Of Class and Services, though unexpected, is strangely perfect, says Tristan. “With a normal indie label, everyone would pretty much know what to expect, but with ATOC choosing us and us choosing them, everything is skewed just that little bit off, like 90 degrees. Nobody quite knows where to put things. In a way, just that weird angle creates a certain energy, you know?”

Indeed, that premise of misplacement, of disturbance as a catalyst for growth, is a major theme in both the artistic and personal lives of the band members. Though each phrases it differently (Tristan says “disruption” while Christopher favors “destruction”), both understand and try to relay the concept that culture’s fragments are there to be used, re-used and abused.

“The birth of anything comes from the destruction of something old,” says Pravdica. “That’s always been a theme through my entire life: what happens if I break this? I want to destroy music, I want to destroy my life, I want to destroy my band but, in essence, I want to better everything.”

Adds Bechet, “That’s very constructive.”
Your Desire is My Business is out now on A Touch of Class.
www.trztn.com/services, www.atochoclassusa.com



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- 8. Johanna for DC Shoes (\$90)
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Big thanks to David for the cakes. www.myfriendtheweddingcake.com



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AMSTERJAM
Dam good fun at the tenth annual ADE conference.

The tenth installment of the **Amsterdam Dance Event (October 27-29, 2005)** shone the light on homeland heroes, including labels like Delsin, Clone and Rushhour, and DJs Joris Voorn, Kraak & Smaak and a gaggle of Dutch trance superstars (Armin Van Buuren, Ferry Corsten, Tiesto). The buzz at the daytime event was all about ring tones and internet music consumption, with Beatport having just announced its millionth download. Paul Van Dyk (despite the name, actually a German) gave an invigorating, eloquent

keynote speech after having just topped *DJ Magazine's* list of the Top 100 DJs in the world. *XLR8R* hosted a lively panel on the future music—featuring Monolake, MJ Cole and Jesper Dahlbäck, among others—while Acid Junkies' Stefan Robbers debuted the MASE (Multi Angle Surround Engine), an interface that lets DJs and producers control the spatial location of their sound. As night fell on Leidseplein, falafels were consumed, doobies were smoked and packs of label managers, club veterans and drunk 18-year-



olds alike headed to venues from the massive Paradiso and Melkweg to bars like Bitterzoet and swanky restaurant/clubs Panama and The Mansion. Highlights included Soulwax performing their banging, cock-rocking *Nite Versions* live, packed-out electro showcases featuring the likes of Anthony Rother and Legowelt, a Sonar Kollektiv night with Micatone and Dixon and the return of the Kindred Spirits weekender, with future soul stalwarts Dwele, Róisín Murphy and RednoseDistrikt in the house. Somehow we missed a tag-team by Billy the Klit and William Shagspeare (with their friend Jip DeLuxe in tow) but, hey, you can't be everywhere at once. *Vivian Host*

www.amsterdancedanceevent.com

Clockwise from top left: *XLR8R's* panel (moderator Vivian Host with Monolake, MJ Cole, Philip Sherburne and Boris Meinhold from Micatone), Paul Van Dyk giving his keynote speech, RednoseDistrikt, the crowd at Panama



ALOE BLACC
EMANON'S MC MAKES SONGS TO COOL AND SOOTHE YOU.

WORDS: MAX HERMAN PHOTO: ANTHONY BROWNING

Aloe Blacc, the MC/vocalist legally known as Nathaniel Dawkins, has had a musician's ear since childhood. Raised by Panamanian parents in Southern California, Aloe has always saturated himself with every bit of culture he comes across.

"As a kid, every weekend we were at another family member or another friend's house from Panama, just partying," recalls Aloe. "The kids would be in the room and we'd all just be having fun, and then just hearing our parents out in the front room drinking, laughing, salsa dancing (and) playing dominos was a great, great experience as a kid."

Spending his early years on a military base, Aloe was also exposed to hip-hop at a young age and formed a b-boy crew with some local kids. However, when his family relocated to a sleepy suburb in Orange County, hip-hop was close to nonexistent. Yet Aloe kept his ear open to the static-filled airwaves of LA rap radio; by high school, he was making his own music with DJ Exile manning the boards.

Aloe and Exile eventually became Emanon, and in March 2005, ten years after their first meeting, they dropped the adventurous full-length debut, *The Waiting Room*. The release saw Aloe and Exile running the gamut of styles, incorporating elements of dancehall, jazz, soul and folk. But it's still a hip-hop record. Thus Emanon fans will probably be taken by surprise by Aloe's solo work—especially considering that he sings on all but one track of his forthcoming *Stones Throw* debut.

"I think [longtime fans] will be able to roll with it—the ones

that are true music fans and not just die-hard hip-hop heads," predicts Aloe. "But everything that I do is from a hip-hop paradigm. So even though it strays away from hip-hop, I still have that in mind and in my soul when I'm making these tracks."

Early peeks into his new solo venture reveal two very distinct singles: the salsa-infused bilingual track "Bailar" and "Want Me," a soulful psychedelic experience. As for what's to come, Aloe says that his self-produced genre-defying numbers will be nothing short of inspirational. "When you think of the songs that helped you get through times...those are the kind of songs I want to put on my album."

Aloe Blacc's yet-to-be-titled solo album is due out this spring on *Stones Throw*. www.aloeblogg.com

PAWS ACROSS EUROPE TOUR Diary

Mohawks and hangovers with Kid606 and Drop the Lime.



October 17: Amsterdam
Miguel gets harassed by squatter breakcore dreadlocked freaks selling fake Ecstasy, British soccer hooligans' girlfriends sabotage the stage during DTL's set and sing pop lyrics over gabber. Wow...

Greeter



October 23: Hamburg
Mohawks vs. combovers, who will win? Ralf from Golden Pudel pulls out the ruckus once again—a full on Fa-ge-rrrrr. Getting back to the hotel was a struggle, though. Attack of the prostitutes in puffy jackets, get it?

OCT. 11 OCT. 11 OCT. 11



CRAZY

(NO THANK YOU)



October 25: Warsaw
Worst hangover of the whole entire tour! Absolute hell, a one-lane highway for 12 hours. Promoter checks us into a Catholic hotel for visiting priests that has an all-night TV channel of nothing but girls in swimsuits. What saves us after the show is a 24-hour bus-ateria for cab drivers and night owls that makes pierogi and kiełbasa. Deelicious.



606



October 28: Budapest
The motherfucking jumpoff! After the show (at 6 a.m.), the promoter Balasz takes us to this celebrity bar where local celebrities and porn stars drink red wine and Pepsi while slamdancing and playing air guitar to Rage Against The Machine. Boomboxes and pirate flags hang from the ceiling over a drumset that anybody can tear it up on.

October 11: Leeds
Our first show! The Brudenell is this old social club that allows event crews like Cops and Robbers to throw kick-ass shows—the only drawback is they gotta be over by 11 p.m. Afterwards kids threw computer monitors out four-story crownstones while we ate fish and chips at a remixed John Peel memorial and combed the college area for power adaptors and converters. Headline of local paper mentions microwaved cats and drowned dogs. PETA, where are you?

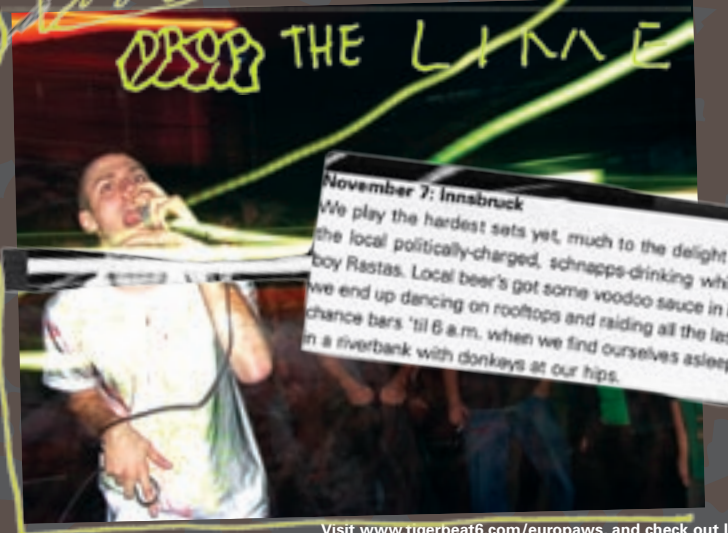
October 13: Liverpool
It's the first annual John Peel day and our show is graced by John Peel's family and Maryanne Hobbs from Breezeblock/Radio 1. Our sets get broadcasted with other artists worldwide in his honor. Afterparty takes an odd turn into chop chop mohawk party for all. Thank for the shave, Mary!

P.S. P.S. P.S.

October 14, London, UK
Tour manager/driver Kevin can't handle his resemblance to Mr. T and shaves off his mohawk. Then there were two. Shut Up and Dance tears it up with their new material and old school rave classics before MCing over the first half of Kid606's set. We are completely bonked tonight and so is the crowd. The only way to fully re-live this one is to see the video at www.bangface.com.



November 1: Athens
An endless supply of handmade mojitos gets us all warmed up for the massive hike up to the mind-blowing Acropolis. Sad little puppies everywhere—PETA needs to come out here and save some! Athens is definitely the only place we can't find a doner kebab at 2 a.m. though.



November 7: Innsbruck
We play the hardest sets yet, much to the delight of the local politically-charged, schnapps-drinking white boy Rastas. Local beer's got some voodoo sauce in it. We end up dancing on rooftops and raiding all the last chance bars 'til 6 a.m. when we find ourselves asleep in a riverbank with donkeys at our hips.



For all the playfully plunked pop beats and quirky crunching textures synonymous with Cologne's Areal Records, *Kobol*, the debut full-length from label honcho Metope (a.k.a. Michael Schwanen), plays it big and twisted; booming, chugging and hissing along as if destined to rock the haunting expanses of pre-dawn warehouse parties. But despite its forward-charging determination, *Kobol* is equal parts melodious and melancholic. Cologne-based cronies Kompakt have long said that Schwanen's digital sound yearns to be made flesh, and it's this Pinocchio syndrome that seems to drive his music—indeed, Schwanen imbues his tracks with enough warmth to get even the darkest of embers glowing. *XLR8R* recently caught up with the happy-go-lucky German to talk about his obsession with a certain clear liquid. *James Jung*

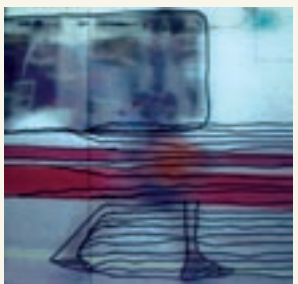
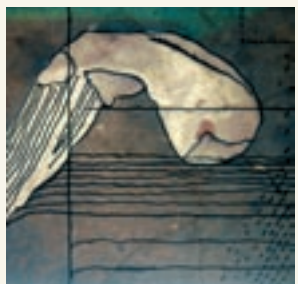
www.areal-records.com

Metope on vodka:

"I'm a vodka drinker. Not on any basis that's going to lead me toward a 12-step recovery program, but before big performances, I like to loosen up with a few tumblers. I'm pretty discerning with what I sip, and my current obsession is Grey Goose. Playing live can feel a bit strange sometimes: you can't always remain anonymous in a dark DJ booth, so it's nice to discard your inhibitions before taking the stage. My tastes have even made a convert out of my friend and neighbor, (Canadian expat and Ladomat 'rockno' purveyor) Pan/Tone. I recently convinced him to abandon the fiery burn of his preferred whiskey for the smooth pleasure of vodka. Though I like to consider myself a novice connoisseur, things have sometimes gotten slightly out of hand. Once at [Berlin boîte] WMF, my thirst got the better of me, resulting in some unintentional spotlight hogging that encroached on the late-night DJ's deck time—details remain foggy, but I was told I played a super set!"

OBSESSIONS: METOPE

Michael Schwanen's haunted acid is fueled by the hard stuff.



BUCKLE UP

AGF and Sue.C take you on a mesmerizing, chaotic journey.

The magical relationship between vocalist/video artist Sue.C (Sue Costabile) and laptop musician AGF (Antye-Greie Fuchs) began three years ago at Mutek, when Costabile created visuals to accompany Greie's music; since then, the pair has performed together numerous times. Rather than document their friendship as snapshots in an album, they've compiled their memories into the animated, sound-enhanced *Mini Movies* (Asphodel, \$TKTK). At the core of

this DVD/CD is *fourtythousand3hundred20 memories*, a 25-minute video presentation that melds still shots, artwork and video with sparse electronic beats. Shot in New York, Berlin, London, Tokyo and elsewhere, the film travels through memories and landscapes that are at times beautiful, haunting, disastrous and hopeful. Though the video's rapid-fire pace and rambling footage of cityscapes is disorienting, AGF guides the viewer with a narration of quietly

penetrating spoken word. The package also includes an interview with the duo, a 'making of' and a CD-only version of the soundtrack (AGF's third album). It also finds Costabile and Fuchs launching their "Mini-Movie Movement," an invitation to creative people to work in sound and image as a way of observing and interpreting everyday life. *Anne Machalinski*

www.minimoviemovement.com, www.asphodel.com



RIICOCHET KLASHNEKOFF
BRITAIN'S RAWEST RAPPER AIMS, SHOOTS AND FIRES.

WORDS: SARAH BENTLEY PHOTO: GRUBBY

Ricochet Klashnekoff is a renegade London rapper 'mans' would follow into battle. His spirited street odes, loved by the capitol's pirate radio stations, ring out from the car stereos of rude boys and backpack hip-hoppers alike. And now—after a year of enduring false promises from every major label going—Klash is releasing his benchmark debut album, *Lion Hearts*, independently.

For those of you not familiar with Britain's favorite mutineer, let me acquaint you. In 2003, he dropped "The Sagas Of Klashnekoff," a bombshell debut EP of anthems sandwiched between excerpts from the classic '70's movie *Babylon*. The biggest tracks—"Murda," "Jankroville," "All I Got"—were raw diaries of everyman tribulations delivered in East London "You get me" rap and "Me nah like him" Jamaican deejaying. Angry yet measured, base but complex, Klash's rhymes were an antidote to grime—he hit a nerve with youth who wanted more from their music than a fierce beat and some madcap emceeing.

"It's not about the idiot ting," says Klash. "Grown youths can relate to me. You don't have to be top thug. You can be yourself and still be cool. A song can change your life. I have people telling me 'Black Rose' [a poignant track about meeting his babymama and dealing with the death of his father] helped them deal with the death of their mum. Youths tell me I made them see a different way and elders appreciate what I'm trying to do."

Yet those unfamiliar with the subtleties of Klash's conscious lyricism remain confused—Klash still has to tirelessly defend his angst-filled timbres and aggressive name to journalists and check signers.

"People don't get it," he rails. "The Klashnekoff was designed for the common man. They're the guns of freedom fighters. There's a famous poster of Malcolm X looking out his window and he's holding a Klashnekoff. I'm in a revolutionary mind-state. But fuck my name. Tony Blair has a nice name, wears a suit and is responsible for killing thousands of people. I'm a product of his system. There's context to the name Ricochet Klashnekoff. There's context to all my lyrics."

This lyrical context couldn't be more evident than on *Lion Hearts*. Showing an increased maturity and clarity of thought,

Klash issues a multi-pronged attack on the government and the fickle music business. On a personal level, he offers hope, taking listeners on an honest journey through his changing attitude towards the death of his father, his daily mission to provide for his sons and his struggle to walk a righteous path despite the distractions of street life.

"Society promotes unobtainable wealth," says Klash. "They pump it in our face 24/7. It breeds frustration, desperation and misguided values. When you're faced with few options you get caught up. Every man has his demons. I fight mine everyday. If you don't fight, the system eats you up. That's what my album's about: the fight."

Ricochet Klashnekoff's *Lion Hearts* LP and *Focus Mode* mixtape are out now. www.represent.co.uk

KONRAD BLACK

VANCOUVER'S MINIMAL TECHNO MANIAC TAKES YOU TO THE DARK SIDE.

WORDS: FRED MIKETA PHOTO: CEDRIC MEISTER

Can minimal techno ever be too dark? In the world of Konrad Black, the answer is most certainly, no. With his roots in a plethora of different musical genres, Vancouver BC's Todd Shillington (a.k.a. Konrad Black) has flirted his way through Vancouver's hip-hop and drum & bass scenes, finding his niche in a dark mixture of ambiance and perfectly realized glitch. Shillington's dirty bass threads, demonically whispered vocals and dissonant, crunching fuzz pick up where icons like Maurizio left off, setting new standards of raw simplicity. Seeking solace in legendary outcasts from Jimi Hendrix to Angus Young—and the heavy metal gods in between—Shillington's result is an encumbered and atmospheric voyage into the night. "When I started hearing 4/4 music that wasn't just sexy, funky, and cheesy shit with wailing vocals, that's when I got excited about sound again," he says.

Shillington's been involved in the DJ and producer circuit for over ten years, contributing to and collaborating with some of the scene's most notorious masterminds, including Swayzak, Circlesquare and UNKLE. Collaborations aside, he's gone from living and working in London (at Ed Rush & Optical's legendary D&B label Virus Recordings) to co-founding the Canadian label Wagon Repair (which released his last two 12" singles, "Draconia" and "Medusa Smile"). Shillington's hellish nuance is profoundly dynamic and stays clear of overproduced digital clichés that permeate the electronic stratosphere. When asked how he'd revamp the realm of producing, Shillington muses, "I would change how digital electronic music sounds these days. Laptops have made it easier for people to make music, but they've also created a huge



number of thin-sounding records."

Since Shillington's initial release on UK drum & bass label Formation, he's translated his lust for mid-'90s hip-hop and Metalheadz-era breaks into a unique techno vision. Driven and inspired by cinema, hallucinations, and woodland areas, his mystique has imagery ingrained into it, and there's no way to avoid his inspired passion for blackened art. Describing his sound as "dark, liquid metal," this DMT-driven Pink Floyd enthusiast has immense plans for the future. With an EP for Wagon Repair in the works and a stint on the road, the future of minimal techno is looking that much brighter. Or is that darker?

"Medusa Smile" and "Draconia" are out now on Wagon Repair. www.wagonrepair.ca

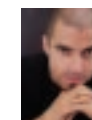
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1



2



3



4



5



6

SPIN CYCLE

News and gossip from the music world

Asheru (a.k.a. Gabriel Ben), one half of Maryland hip-hoppers Unspoken Heard, has composed the intro music for Cartoon Network/Adult Swim's *The Boondocks*. Ben met *Boondocks* creator Aaron Magruder at the University of Maryland in the late '90s and had been hoping to collaborate with him since. *Slippy electronic lords Underworld* have announced their *Riverrun* project, delivering their music directly to the fans with a series of download-only listening experiences. The U's are serving up a salad bar of styles, from broken bleep through sub-aquatic Kraftwerk-style electro. www.underworldlive.com Dancehall heartthrobs **Tanto Metro and Devonte** ("Everybody Falls In Love") will release their new album, *Musically Inclined*, via VP Records this month. The set is produced by reggae's biggest names: **Tony "CD" Kelly, Christopher Longman Birch** and **Robert Livingston** (of Big Yard Productions). **Warp Records** has announced new albums forthcoming this year from **Jimmy Edgar** and **Nightmares On Wax**, plus DVDs from **Jamie Lidell** (live) and **Plaid**. Blissful British IDM producer Lee Norris—better known as **Metamatics** and **Norken**—has released his new album, *Our Memories Of Winter*, as a double LP and single CD on Germany's Combination. Combo's '06 roster includes dirty-house man **Jake** and the oddly shaped **Swimmingpool**. www.combination-rec.com The inexpensive **JBL's Creature II** three-piece speaker system features sci-fi design and radical bass performance. The system is ready to "plug and play" with computers, MP3 players and PS2s. www.jbl.com English funksters **Louis Slipperz**, brother **Elmore Judd** and the band **Rawdog** have collaborated to create a new hip-hop hybrid—music that sounds like A-Trak or Q-Bert mixing the JB's but played completely live. *Bareback Instrumentals* is out February 6 on Rawdog Productions. The new single from **Rob**

Acid (a.k.a. Robert Babicz), "Prism" on *Audiomatique*, features a remix from hot techhead **Robag Wruhme** (*Wighnomy Brothers*). Cop it at www.audiomatique.com New York's **Ten12 Records** has released a new batch of mixes of the legendary, oft-sampled early '70s funk project **The Skull Snaps** ("It's a New Day"). It's the first authorized Skull Snaps master edit and re-issue since the release of their groundbreaking album in 1973. www.ten12records.com/snapped **Propellerhead Software** and **Berklee College of Music** announced that a complete, full-functioning copy of Reason would be provided to every computer on the BCM campus with all updates into the future. The site license, for over 4,500 Berklee students, faculty and staff, is the largest to date for the Swedish company. Portland, OR-based hip-hop trio **Lifesavas** is readying their sophomore release *Gutterfly*, due out early summer 2006. The album will feature guests including **Dead Prez, Camp Lo, Fishbone, Vernon Reid, Jake One, Oh No, Vitamin D** and **Smif N Wessun**. UK grime comp *Run The Road 2* drops this month with hitmakers **Lady Sovereign, Wiley, Kano, Jammer, Demon** and many new voices. Michigan's **Ghostly/Spectral** crew releases their opus, *Idol Tryouts 2*, on February 7. Spread over two discs (*Avant-Pop* and *SMM*), it features exclusive tracks from Skeletons & The Girl-Faced Boys, Mobius Band, as well as label staples Matthew Dear, **Dabrye**, Lusine, Solvent and Cepia. Dancehall singer **Ce'Cile's** hit "Hot Like Dat" on the Throwback Giggy riddim by producers Leftside & Esco has spawned a new video. Check it at MuzikMedia.com and CC's site, www.cecileflava.com. San Francisco-based music software company **Cycling '74** is working on a new program, **UpMix**, a surround processing and mixing software package. UpMix will allow the user to **rotate and reorder** five channels of surround sound. www.cycling74.com. Tune in to broken jazz in the east on **Radio Antena M, Montenegro**, presented by Marko "Mr. Montech" Stojovic (Fat Vinyl) every Tuesday. Hear Theo Parrish, Povo, Alice Russell, Ski Oakenfull and more at www.migrations.cg.yu.

1. Dabrye (Will Calcutt); 2. Lifesavas; 3. Underworld (www.perou.co.uk); 4. Rawdog; 5. JBL Creature II; 6. Jimmy Edgar

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Nu-Mark & Cut Chemist	Josh Homme
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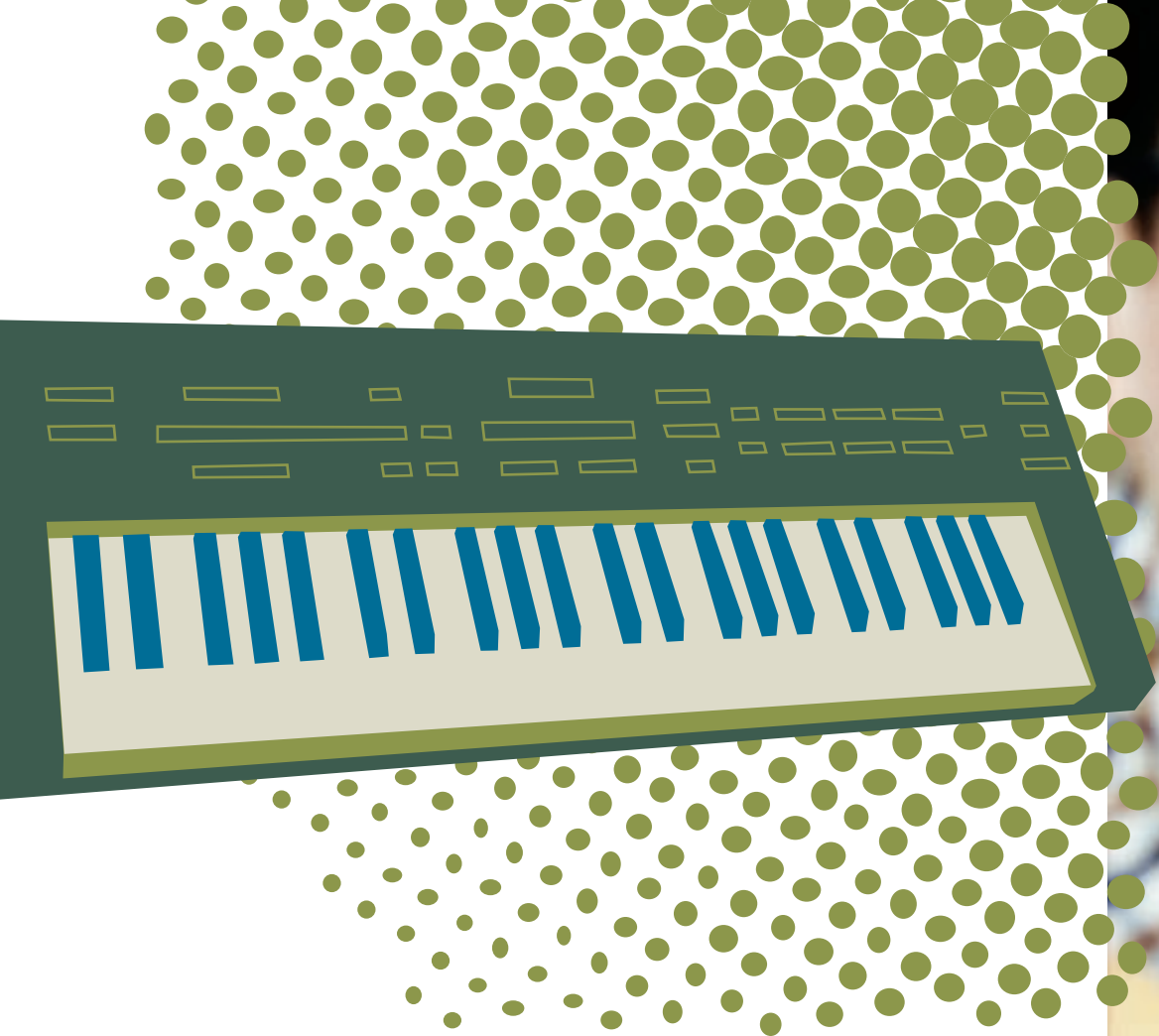
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PON WOODGE

London's Hot Chip lives in a bouncy castle of buoyant melodies, bling-bling dreams...and plenty of Prince records.

WORDS: ROB GEARY PHOTOS: MARCUS CLACKSON GUEST DESIGNERS: SANS NOM



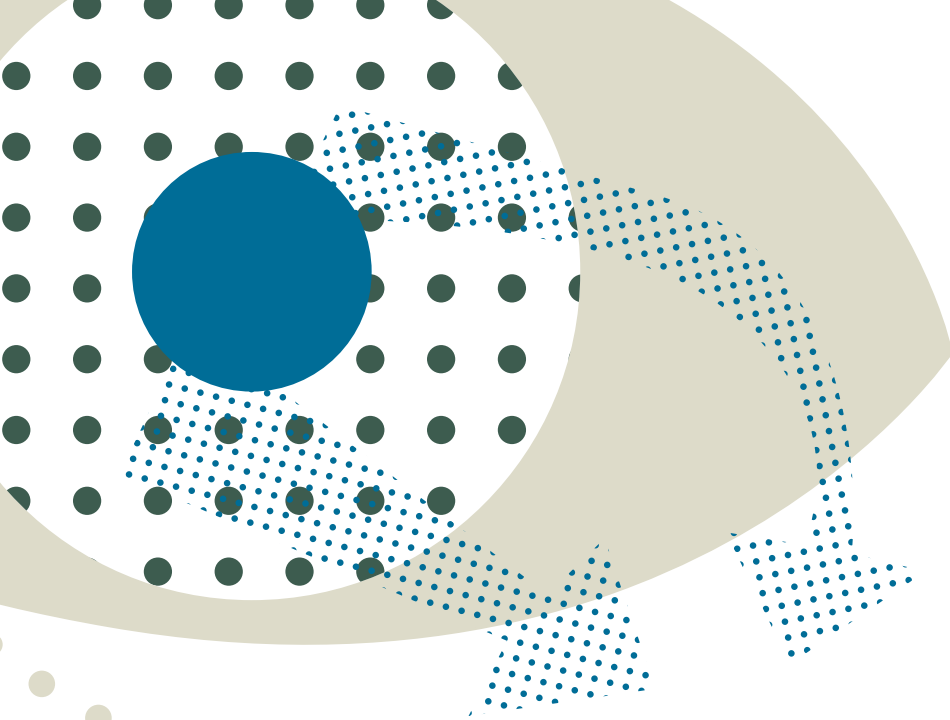
The five-man party that is London's Hot Chip must confound those poor CD-sticker-blurb writers. On their debut album *Coming on Strong*, the band mixes absurdity and realism, detail and grandeur, boom-bap and hush hush in equal measures, with lyrics that range from literary to Ghostface-ian and beats that recall grime, Scritti Politti, Timbaland and the Postal Service, sometimes all at the same time. Their weirdly original and seductively unpredictable tunes defy easy description, yet make sense to the ear, as attested to by the three new members who have joined the original duo of Alexis Taylor and Joe Goddard.

The new additions—multi-instrumentalists Owen Clarke and Al Do It, plus drummer Felix Martin—were drawn to performing a record they had occasionally added to, but mainly heard as friends. *Coming on Strong*, bedroom-recorded by Taylor and Goddard, was released in the UK in 2004 on Moshi Moshi; this month, it arrives Stateside courtesy of Astralwerks.

And while the Yankees are just coming to terms with *Coming on Strong*'s curious crunk/IDM/blue-eyed-soul blend, the new five-strong Chip has already churned out another album for spring 2006. Led by the surging, DFA-remixed dance single "Over and Over," an ode to loops and repetition punctured by snarling guitar, ghostly organs, calls-and-responses and more woodblock and chimes than you can shake a stick at. With five musical partners pushing in every conceivable direction at once, we thought we would find out what makes the individual Chips tick.



Hot Chip: Alexis Taylor, Joe Goddard, Felix Martin (in shades), Al Doyle and Owen Clarke (in tie)



CHIP 1: ALEXIS TAYLOR

Alexis' soft, high voice forms the core of Hot Chip's vocal identity, though at times he is undercut by Joe's faintly ridiculous baritone. "I suppose it fell to me to be the singer because I started writing some lyrics," muses Taylor. "There wasn't any grand plan behind it. We didn't really know what we were doing except we were quite keen not to sound like other people. I don't set out to confuse people particularly, but I do want to surprise them and give them some new pleasurable sounds they really can engage with." Though normally he delivers heartfelt (sometimes heart-breaking) lyrics, he'll get in and mix it up, as on "Down With Prince," where he uses a pitch-perfect Prince imitation to take to task those who would ironically cover the Purple One. "I had to deliberately try and make a record that sounded like Prince in order to get the point across that there's no point in ripping off someone like that. Do you see what I mean?"

If you don't, skip to "Playboy" instead, a deliberate homage to an unlikely source: Justin Timberlake's Timbaland-powered mega-hit "Cry Me a River." As Taylor remembers it, "Literally, we stopped watching the video and went upstairs and made the song as an attempt to make a song as good as that. I wanted it to be as grandiose-sounding as possible—no one could possibly start a song quoting from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and expect to be taken seriously."

Truly, it is easier to stomach as it's punctured in self-aware fashion by Joe's boasts of rolling in his Peugeot blaring Yo La Tengo, making it both ridiculously sincere and sincerely ridiculous. "The whole album's really self-referential," explains Taylor. "There's other tracks that didn't make it on [the record] where Joe just sings about the band Hot Chip every other line (in the way that hip-hop people talk about themselves all the time). I would describe how we are a bit like Stevie Wonder but we can't really play our instruments very well. I think there's quite a sense of bathos in most of the tracks on the album because we're really quite serious about what we're doing but we can laugh at ourselves at the same time."

CHIP 2: OWEN CLARKE

Owen Clarke admits he can't play his instruments very well, but at least he has a good excuse: he's not really a musician. "I did fine art, so painting's sort of my slant really," he says, shrugging. From creating the album cover, this longtime school chum's "roving role" has grown into playing guitar and keyboards, his discordant Casio riffs pepper the record. Where other members are likely to break off into antigravity free jazz or minimalist fake house, Clarke pulls them back to earth: "I listened to the radio when I was young; I was never an album kid. I like things with a groove and funky and...that sounds awful! I like inventive pop melodies."

CHIP 3: FELIX MARTIN

Felix Martin plays drums and drum machines with the funky efficiency of his beloved minimal techno records, pushing the groove forward with an ear toward labels like Kompakt and Traum. But don't expect robotic rhythms to take over, as he has four other people and his own diverse listening to cope with. Plus, you'll hear touches of his obsessions with dancehall and American archive music creep in. "I try to reinvent the way I do things so it doesn't become just button-pushing," says Martin. "We're five quite different personalities and we've all got our own musical background that's quite strong, so something comes out that's a little bit strange. It's not like we're all five people that want to make clean techno records or banging hip-hop records. We haven't managed to resolve our musical differences."

CHIP 4: AL DO IT

On occasion, Martin and his melodic partner, guitarist/keyboardist Al Do It, break off into their own remix unit, united by their fondness for minimal dance rhythms. Al, a former Warp Records employee, admits his social life isn't that of superstar DJ or rocker ("I live the life of a retired 50-year-old schoolteacher. Really, I'm even wearing a few corduroy trousers these days," he says), but in minimal techno he hears an approach that's use-

ful in pushing Hot Chip in unpredictable directions. "All of those guys look after their sounds so well, [with] that clean and jacking flavor that is useful to bounce things off. They're not necessarily complete song structures—we quite like to take songs that Alexis is writing that have traditional verse/chorus structure and crash them." On their post-*Coming on Strong* material, Al promises to crash the party even harder with "noisy textures and free jazz breakdowns" worthy of Ornette Coleman.

CHIP 5: JOE GODDARD

Hot Chip started in front of Joe Goddard's first computer, recording simple acoustic songs with Taylor into Cubase. Their teenage friendship has grown into an easy working process, with each adding lyrics and vocals, and Goddard tweaking the loops and music. "Sometimes if the lyrics are kind of serious I'll think it could be funny if there was something kind of dumb after this, just to make the songs interesting in where they go," Goddard offers. "We do it in a very haphazard way; we just think of something and record it very quickly. We let each other do what we feel is right enough and it comes together at some point."

Goddard's lyrics tend to take the form of hip-hop paraphrases—dreaming about Escalades and his "boo"—but they're delivered with a seriousness that keeps them from slipping into easy irony. These are the idle fantasies of an Englishman who would be Jay-Z if he had the chops, and they add a gently weird humor to Alexis' emo confessions. "We wanted to make the rhythms interesting so you could get addicted to listening to some loop or a keyboard melody and then discover there's a lot to some of the lyrics. Some of them are quite heartfelt or quite sad, and then another moment there might be a bit of light relief and give you a quick laugh. It's nice to have things to discover in music—you don't want to put a CD on and feel like you got it the first time."

Hot Chip's *Coming on Strong* is out now on DFA/Astralwerks (US) and Moshi Moshi (Europe).

Their new album, *The Warning*, will be out this spring on DFA/Astralwerks.

www.hotchip.co.uk, www.astralwerks.com, www.dfarecords.com



Hot Chip's Hot Reads

With three literature degrees in one band and lyrics that reference T.S. Eliot, you know you oughta listen to Hot Chip when they tell you what's popping off the page.

Alexis: "I've been re-reading Herman Melville's 'Bartleby,' a short story about an assistant in a law company. Everything he's asked to do, he says 'I'd prefer not to' over and over. It's one of my favorites."

Al: "Felix and I like William Sebald. He was a lecturer at the University of East Anglia but was born in Germany and wrote in German. He wrote this strange literature that's part travelogue and part memoir, and goes off on these tangents."

Felix: "I got inspired by Thomas Pynchon's *Mason and Dixon*—he's got little stories woven into the fabric of the novel. I was interested in the idea of maybe turning some of those stories into a cycle of songs."

Owen: "I often lose books, I'm terrible. Once I'm on the plane I put my book in the front pocket and walk off the plane when we get there."

Joe: "*The Life and Times of Sun Ra* by John Szwed, which goes deep into Sun Ra's ideas about ancient Egypt. When you see us live there's a bit where Al plays keyboard solos and spins round and round—that came from a Sun Ra documentary."



SOMEPLACES

WHAT IT LOOK LIKE

With a dose of B-more club, Philly attitude and Brooklyn beats, Spankrock is the new face of booty bass.
WORDS: JESSE SERWER
PHOTOS: DUSTIN ROSS
GUEST DESIGNERS: SANS NOM

"WHEN YOU GET YOURSELF UP AS A SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS AND GOOD PERSON AND THEN SOMEONE IS ASKING YOU TO MAKE, LIKE, A LUKE RECORD THAT'S A BIG CHANGE."

"This wasn't supposed to happen," laughs Naeem Juwan. "It just wasn't supposed to happen."

Seated inside a Brooklyn falafel joint in the midst of an extended stay in New York City, the Baltimore-bred, Philly-based MC better known as Spankrock is having a good laugh at the strange arc that has led him to be associated with Baltimore club music, the bass music variation suddenly on national blast after more than 15 years as a secret handshake of sorts for Maryland-area black kids.

"I would have never thought that I'd have recorded a song with Scottie B," the soft-spoken 24-year-old says of a recent collabo with the B-more breaks originator. "I would have never ever guessed I'd be interviewed about Baltimore club music."

Like many Charm City youth in the '90s, Juwan spent his nights at high school dances and clubs like The Paradox and Hammerjacks, freaking out to the sounds of Miss Tony and DJ Spen. But as a scrawny prep school kid sheltered from the city's rough streets, he felt a bit out of place as he came to embrace an entirely different avenue of urban culture.

"Baltimore is neat for young kids 'cause you can go to some pretty crazy parties when you're, like, 14," Spank says. "I went to the clubs a lot. But I was really trying to be a conscious rapper like Mos Def. I thought I'd be signed when I was 16 on some backpacker, underground shit. I was coming up to Brooklyn and making demos with (Boot Camp Click/Black Star producer) Sean J Period. I honestly thought I was gonna be a part of Black Star..."

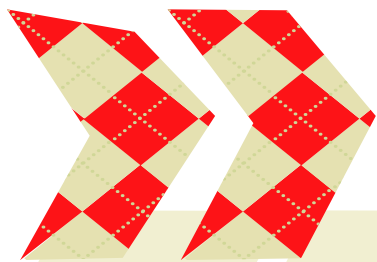
I only realized (club music) had an effect on me when I heard Low Budget play Baltimore club records for the first time in Philly. I flipped because I hadn't heard that music in years."

POSSE UP

Wearing glasses and a hooded sweatshirt accented with a pair of punk rock-ish buttons, Naeem Juwan looks like he might be more comfortable carving a bowl on a skateboard than toasting cocky cool-like about wet coochie. But give him some shades, his gold "Spankrock" chain—and beats from production wiz XXXChange (a.k.a. Alex Epton, the other half of Spankrock the group) and DJs Devlin and Darko—and you have the phenomenon that's been rocking parties up and down the East Coast for the past year.

"People get confused 'cause my rap name is Spankrock," Juwan says. "Then XXXChange and I signed the deal together [under the Spankrock as well]. We're kind of a rapper/producer team—like GangStarr, just more





NUNYA

“WE’RE KIND OF A RAPPER PRODUCER TEAM LIKE GANGSTARR JUST MORE RETARDED.”

retarded. But everything I do is very family-oriented.”

More than even a family, Spankrock is a movement of sorts. Their live shows often include Amanda Blank, an up-and-coming white femcee from Philly; the Love Peace Project, a family of trained West African drummers and dancers from B-more; and “The Eagle,” a Philly chick who Juwan says was “always on the dancefloor dropping down just getting her eagle on anyway.”

Spankrock’s traveling booty patrol was foreshadowed perfectly by their debut single, “Put That Pussy On Me,” which outed on Turntablelab’s Money Studies label last summer. With cover art depicting a perfectly round ass with a thong pulled down right below the crack, the “12” is sure to turn heads in the electronica section, where it’s probably been inadvertently placed since Ninja Tune subsidiary Big Dada picked it up. But no one’s mind is blown more by the Spankrock concept than Mr. Spank himself.

“It’s different than anything I would have expected of myself,” he says. “It was Alex’s idea for me to make poppy, ass-shaking music. When you set yourself up as socially conscious and a good person and then suddenly someone is asking you to make, like, a Luke record, that’s a big change. But it was more honest for me then writing about politics ‘cause even though I try to stay up on that, I spent a lot of time in parties getting fucked up.”

SPANK MODE

There’s more than just ass and bass in the Spankrock mix, though. With his nasal voice and relaxed flow, Juwan’s take on rhyme evokes Schoolly D, another Philly MC who combined ig’nant lyrics with sonic innovation. One of the first songs Juwan wrote in Spank mode was “Rick Rubin,” an ode to the very notion that party music and artistic experimentation are not incompatible.

“Before Alex, I was working with this guy Steve McCready, just trying to push away from underground rap,” Spank recalls. “No one really liked what we were doing. (McCready’s) beats were

strange, harsh on the ear almost, but I loved ‘em—I got excited trying to figure how to rap over them. I kinda figured how to make things exciting again. I stopped going to open mics and trying to battle people at parties and got to thinking, ‘How do you have your influences and still create something totally new?’ So I used Rick Rubin as an example of someone who really pushed the limits of what rap could be.”

That freeform vibe runs throughout *YoYoYoYoYoYo*, the debut LP from Spankrock due this spring. Although earlier Spank releases—like the *Voila* sampler (Money Studies/Big Dada) and the remixes on the “Pussy” 12-inch—cram everything from Can to the Beach Boys into the mix, *YoYoYoYoYoYo* contains very few samples and a whole lot of improvisation, according to XXXChange.

“It is mostly me trying to play instruments badly and then chopping them up,” says the Brooklyn-based producer, an old friend of Juwan’s from Baltimore who briefly studied jazz drumming at the New England Conservatory and interned at DFA Records. “There’s a couple songs where my girlfriend at the time sang because we didn’t know any singers.”

While a certain Baltimore spirit is apparent in Spank’s delivery, B-more breaks don’t figure into the mix more than, say, UK grime or even post-punk. But with club music on national blast at the same time Spank is arriving—thanks to Hollertronix, NYC’s Aaron LaCrate and an army of internet cheerleaders—the reference is only natural.

“We’re both from Baltimore so obviously [B-more club] is an influence, but it’s more dance music in general,” XXXChange explains. “There’s artsy shit on there, but it’s hard for us to sit in a room and make serious songs.”

SpankRock’s *YoYoYoYoYoYo* will be out this spring on Big Dada/Ninja Tune. www.bigdada.com. *Voila* is out now on Money Studies. www.turntablelab.com *Emore Gutter Music*, a mix CD featuring exclusives from Spankrock and Amanda Blank, is out now on Milkcrate Records.

PHILADELPHIA



A Tale of Two Cities

B-more native and Philly representative Spankrock takes us on a tour of the mid-Atlantic’s culture capitals.

BALTIMORE IS...

The Paradox

I smoked weed for the first time outside The Paradox, with a half pint of Hennessy, when I was 16. Coming up it was *the* club in Baltimore.

Crab tops

One of the Baltimore Bass Connection’s signature moves along with the ACT (air cock thrust). You can find Devlin & Darko, Chipset, Knicky Knuckles, Uncle Eddie and the gang putting it on blast from state to state.

“Bank Roll” by Tim Trees

That’s probably my favorite Baltimore hip-hop record and one of my favorite hooks in all of rap. Rod Lee produced the beat. I sometimes perform “What it Look Like” over the instrumental.

PHILLY IS...

Low Budget, Major Taylor and Cosmo Baker

You gotta put all three of those guys together as one Philadelphia all-star DJ team. One night of them all spinning would be crazy.

Upstairs at Abysynnia

It’s this Ethiopian restaurant and there’s a bar upstairs called Fiumey. They have the cheapest alcohol in West Philly and good young musicians playing jazz just for the fuck of it.

Beanie Sigel

Beanie and Dizze Rascal are the only rappers that make me want to rap right now.



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DOWN MURDERER

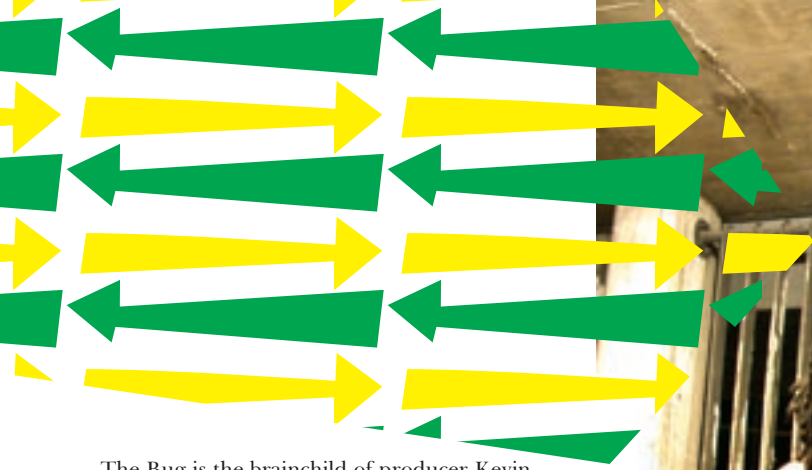
Acid dancehall? Ragga grime? London's The Bug pushes forward with a post-everything Jamaican headfuck fusion.
WORDS: MATT EARP PHOTOS: SHEIKH AMHED GUEST DESIGNERS: SANS NOM



It was 1 a.m. on the fifth floor of an abandoned council flat in London. A massive system had been brought in from Bristol and the Heatwave party was living up to its name. A visit from the authorities and the threat of closure hadn't stopped the headliner from taking the decks but all doors and windows had to be shut. Equipment was failing, a technician was under the decks screwing together a powerstrip, the place was packed with people and even at a quarter power the system was still thumping people with bass while MCs spit lyrical daggers. Everyone dripped sweat, the walls were sticky with it. As The Bug looked up from the decks, he was having another "love it or loathe it" moment.



"KILLING SOUND IS ONE FUCKING OBNOXIOUS, NOISY, BRUTAL, UNFORGIVING, RELENTLESS ANTISOCIAL HEADFUCK OF A RECORD."



Kevin Martin a.k.a. The Bug (center) with MCs Ras B and Warrior Queen

The Bug is the brainchild of producer Kevin Martin, who has been blending hip-hop, industrial and dub sounds together since the early '90s in groups including God, Ice and Techno Animal. The Bug is a solo project and yet it's not, since every track is a collaborative effort between himself and a vocalist. He's been able to assemble an A-list of Jamaican talent over the last several years, with deejays giving voice to his twin obsessions of rhythm and noise. "I've never really felt part of any scene full stop," he says from his London studio. "I basically try and make records that I want to hear that I feel haven't been made elsewhere."

After the 2003 release of *Pressure*, Martin started the Razor X label with Rootsman to release small runs of amped up splattercore breaks. His new album, *Killing Sound*, is due this month from Replex—it collects Razor X's four singles ("Killer," "WWW," "Slew Dem" and "Imitator") and adds five new ones with vocalists Cutty Ranks, The Mexican, El Feco, Tony Tuff and Warrior Queen (who redoes "Killer"). Instrumental versions will be included to create what Martin describes with a satisfied chuckle as "one fucking obnoxious, noisy, brutal, unforgiving, relentless antisocial headfuck of a record...Babylonian babbletalk really."

Martin admits that *Killing Sound* represents the most extreme end of The Bug, but it continues to reference his obsession with Jamaican music. "The challenge is to be open to the roots of where The Bug has come from: my love of dub, dancehall, reggae, roots and ragga, filtered through my own history." Though the Razor X drum programming is often manic and the tracks geared toward upper midrange frequencies, they continue to be anchored by bottom-heavy basslines.

Martin's musical and production style mirrors the cobbled together nature of many Jamaican soundsystems. His speech is filled with words and phrases like "meld," "combine" and "mutate." He built his studio up piece-by-piece from just a CD player, a saxophone and effects pedals to its current combination of digital and valve-oriented equipment. "I'm no purist," he laughs. When he performs out now, he either takes a 24-channel desk with ADATs, synthesizers, effects units and CDs, or uses Final Scratch with add-ons. ("Whatever tickles my fancy or is appropriate for the show really," he explains.)

He is building a soundsystem with help from Russ D of roots/reggae outfit The Disciples—ten 18-inch woofers together with mids that junglist Dillinja sold him, all run with help from dance-

hall MC Ras B and dubsteppers Digital Mystikz. Pulling from different scenes gets to the heart of what Martin is about. "To get into The Bug stuff you have to be open-minded," he says. "I'm just constantly drawn to new sounds and new directions and new mutations in music. And that's why for me there's a beauty in dancehall and grime and still (to an extent) hip-hop, where it's not so much about being retro, it's about moving onwards and not looking back. Music for me should never be limited and should always be open and have an outward-bound trajectory. It shouldn't be trying to hold on to something."

True to that, Martin already has two projects well under way. One is a new The Bug album with MCs Warrior Queen and Ras B. "After Razor X I'm more interested in bass and moving people with low end," says Martin. "The new album has two directions. One is acid dancehall, taking acid lines and merging them with dancehall rhythms, and the other is a cross between grime and dancehall...much more minimal stuff." The other project is a new 7" label called Ladybug. "One side of each release will have a toaster, rapper or grime MC—women like Warrior Queen and Lady Sovereign. The other will have more idiosyncratic singers, people like Nicolette, Ari Up; Cobra Killers have agreed to do vocals on the freaky side." The first single, "Dem a Bomb We" featuring Warrior Queen—"a song about being blitzed out in London at the moment by suicide bombers"—will be out this month as well. Like all of Martin's stuff, expect to love it or loathe it.

The Bug's *Killing Sound* will be out in January on Replex. www.replex.com

KEVIN MARTIN PICKS FIVE OF THE MOST TECHNOLOGICALLY INNOVATIVE SINGLES.

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"MY GREATEST MOTIVATION IS IF SOMEONE SAYS IT CAN'T BE DONE." - ESKA

BREAKING OUT

With black British music at a crossroads, two sisters step up to push things forward.
WORDS: SARAH BENTLEY PHOTOS: MARTINE CHARALAMBOU GUEST DESIGNERS: SANS NOM

There's a revolutionary energy reverberating through speaker boxes and live music venues across the UK. The polar opposite of the junk food-quick fix of manufactured black pop, this is audio gastronomy that nurtures, energizes and heals, and it's being spearheaded by two very different London vocalists: Mpho Skeef and Eska.

You may have heard Mpho's (pronounced "Mm-po") voice on Bugz in the Attic's "Booty La La" or the Phuturistix collabo "Comin' At Ya," but she'll be pushing the boundaries further into '80s electro-funk, jazz and techno when her solo debut is released later this year. Meanwhile, Eska's future-earth-mama soul sounds have driven numbers by Troubleman, Nitin Sawhney and Ty, and received raves from the BBC and crowds at the London Jazz Festival. Raising their voices above the scene's sublime, fusionist den of jazz, soul, reggae, calypso, dance, broken beat, hip-hop and African folk, meet British soul's new first ladies.

What are you about as an artist?

Mpho: Expressing myself [and] the things I experience, and the cross-pollination of cultures that's unique to London.

Eska: I am about communication, confronting limitations and

stereotypes. My greatest motivation is if someone says it can't be done.

Tell us about the scene you've come from.

Mpho: As artists we're different but we have the same references: Soul II Soul, Prince, Stevie Wonder, Cassandra Wilson.

Eska: It's a scene that makes room for exploration. People constantly try out new sounds, morphing and exchanging concepts, dreams and desires.

Who are the musicians/collectives you work with?

Mpho: Bugz In The Attic, Ty, Eska, Jade Fox...

Eska: IG Culture, Attica Blues, Reel People, Mpho Skeef—a whole global network of MCs, dancers, artists and journalists who look at the world differently.



Mpho Skeef (left) and Eska

How does your work differ from the mainstream?

Mpho: We merge sounds, we can't be categorized. We're aware of sales figures but it's not the primary objective.

Eska: In the UK it's about nourishing one solo act, not the musicians who support the act. It's never about strengthening a movement. As a scene we work together, constantly switching between support and lead roles depending on the project.

Both of you have hits in the broken beat scene, yet you're not broken beat artists...

Mpho: Broken beat is a great way of getting your voice out in clubland. It's about breaking up the whole Carnival, dance music, Afro-vibe and putting it back together in a new way. But if you're a good vocalist you can ride over anything.

Eska: Over the past two years I've been privileged enough to make some tunes with broken beat producer IG Culture. There are many places I have traveled where people of all races are expressing themselves in these kind of mutated rhythms.

You've both approached your debut releases via non-conventional routes. How is that working for you?

Mpho: I'm working with Documented, a government-funded record label. It's not much money, but I have full creative control and I don't have to pay back my advance. Their concept is to take an artist from a place where they're doing their thing to a place where people have access to hear them.

Eska: My album's still very much in the making. I worked out my tunes on the road, often playing them when they were half-formed. I needed the spotlight to think through my musical ideas. That's a little weird I guess, but it worked for me.

What's most challenging about building a musical career in the UK?

Mpho: Making opportunities out of what looks like closed doors. Keeping yourself inspired, staying humble and ensuring you continue to treat everything as a learning experience after years of making music.

Eska: There hasn't been a really successful black English artist for 15 years. The UK music

industry is unsure and ignorant about black music—for years it's been an outlet to serve successful African-American artists. Black artists are only now acquiring the determination to create music for their communities without feeling they have to "de-black" to such an extent you wonder what on earth their music has to do with who they are as black people. Now there's a thriving community of MCs, rappers, musicians and producers taking initiative and making it happen for themselves.

How would you recommend each other to new listeners?

Mpho on Eska: Eska is a big musical hug: warm, re-energizing and, at times, unexplainable.

Eska on Mpho: This sister comes from South African musical royalty. Her music reflects her cultural diversity and aspiration. She is a roots version of Sade but of her own space and time.

Mpho Skeef's debut EP "Don't Like You" is out now on Documented. www.urbandevelopment.co.uk. For information on Eska log onto www.eskaworld.com or email her at eskaworld@gmail.com.

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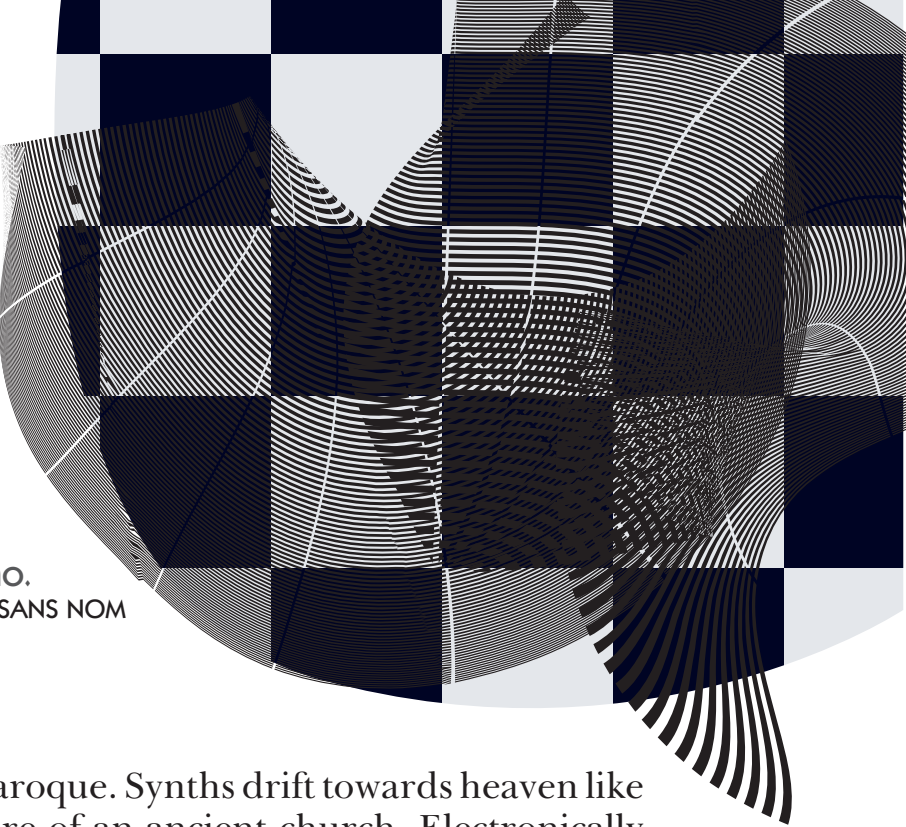


Distributed in the USA by Rykodisc



DARK MATTER

Disarmed finds DK7 dabbling in gothic techno.
WORDS: VIVIAN HOST PHOTO: SESSE LIND GUEST DESIGNERS: SANS NOM



Disarmed is Jesper Dahlbäck at his most baroque. Synths drift towards heaven like demons toward the soot-darkened spire of an ancient church. Electronically warped and delayed guitars ebb and surge in and out of rich atmospheres that are orchestral in scope but digital in feeling. Cold, sparse and crisp Kraftwerkian techno—a Dahlbäck signature—appears in spades, but it rubs against layered shoe-gaze textures and the smoldering ashes of minor key melodies to keep warm.

Dahlbäck didn't get this gothic on his own. It's his collaboration with Mark O'Sullivan—as DK7—that has teased out the moodier, more ornate side of this otherwise stoic Swede. Likewise, it's Dahlbäck who convinced O'Sullivan—who typically produces electronic dub and laidback house as Mighty Quark and Bacuzzi—to channel his inner Dave Gahan, which has resulted in the ominous vocals that often direct the pair's debut album for Output Recordings.

The story behind DK7 is considerably less gloomy. It all harkens back to a Stockholm pizzeria, where O'Sullivan and Dahlbäck first met through a mutual friend. "[My first impression of Jesper] was a guy who walked like a penguin wearing an army jacket," laughs O'Sullivan sarcastically, his Irish brogue scarcely dampened by 12 years of living in Sweden. "He was working on the *Stockholm* [Mix Sessions album for Turbo] and needed someone to help him with guitar stuff." After a smooth initial collaboration, the pair quickly became musical sparring partners, calling each other up when they required a bit of My Bloody Valentine atmospherics or King Jammy echo effects here, or glimmering tech touches there.

After four years of erstwhile tracks for Sunday Brunch and Svek, O'Sullivan and Dahlbäck decided to make something just for themselves. They tapped into the midway point between their respective backgrounds—O'Sullivan's musical upbringing in Cork, Ireland in the '80s and Dahlbäck's coming-of-age in the nascent European rave scene—to create "The Difference" (first released on DK7, then Output). An intense 303 stormer—driven by a creepy O'Sullivan vocal about fucking your brain dry—the track wriggled its way onto the dancefloors of late 2002, driving clubbers into a frenzy while subtly presaging the pending acid house revival.

The ease of working together—along with the enthusiasm of Output label head Trevor Jackson—encouraged the duo to set to work on an entire DK7 album. But the same vibe that had inspired "The Difference" didn't seem to work on other tracks. "In the beginning, we tried to repeat the single—acid, clubby, dancefloor stuff—but we were really fed up with that sound," recalls Dahlbäck. "So we just did what we wanted to. Mark didn't even want to sing but as the project went along he took on

another challenge and tried to really write songs with a pop structure."

Truly, the most striking thing about the album is the resemblance it bears to the time when New Wave intersected with early techno, the gene splicing of bands like Depeche Mode and Human League with Kraftwerk, Cabaret Voltaire and early Detroit sounds. This has to do with its synths and pulsating mechanical beats, but also with the dark, droning lyrics of tracks like "Fire" and "Heart Like a Demon," inspired by an Elvis Costello country song called "Good For the Roses."

This is strange when you consider that 28-year-old Dahlbäck cares little about these bands. "I wasn't too into music when I was little," he admits. "I listened to the radio, but I never really cared to find out who was playing or the name of the songs. I was more interested in dissecting this wall of sound and trying to understand what was going on from [a technological angle]."

When I suggest to him that the album nevertheless has retro influences, he offers, "I guess it's like one leg in the future and one leg in the past." He pauses, weighing his words. "It sounds pretentious, but I can't make a better explanation."

O'Sullivan, meanwhile, is more forthcoming about the record. "It's a very emotional album," he admits. "At the time of recording, we both were going through a lot of things that were totally turning our whole fucking lives upside down [and] Bush was turning the whole fucking world upside down. There was a time when we were working on this album where it was like 'We're lost.' People were just losing their humanity. And it doesn't matter what we say, it's not going to make any difference."

"Other [lyrics were about] matters of the heart and love," he continues, hinting that both he and Dahlbäck went through difficult break-ups while recording *Disarmed*. "It's a very romantic album, I think, and it's a very honest album." And then, as if to prove the -8 degree temperatures outside haven't dampened his sarcasm, he dryly adds, "Men revealing their hearts on an electronic album...Does that make us metrosexuals?"

Disarmed is out on February 8 in the United States and out now in Europe, both on Output. www.outputrecordings.com

FUTURE WITH A PH

English duo Phuturestix redefines soulful club music, a dozen records at a time.
WORDS: PATRICK SISSON PHOTO: FRAZER WALLER GUEST DESIGNERS: SANS NOM

It's no secret that English garage producer Zed Bias has a skilled touch in the studio. The Streets, Whitney Houston and even Destiny's Child have tapped him to remix their music. But these days, even if a diva like Beyoncé stopped by the studio, Zed might not have the time to lay down her vocals. That's because the production whiz isn't merely making his tracks. Along with production partner Injekta, the other half of Phuturestix, he's trying to sculpt the new sound of their burgeoning Phuture Lounge label.

"The whole concept is more organic now," says Zed, who also records as Maddslinky. "When we started making music together, we weren't able to achieve what we wanted to in a technical sense. Now we know."

The new imprint gives the music mavens a chance to add their signature touch—tweaked two-step that's full, atmospheric and refined—to a wide range of releases. Coupled with *Breathe Some Light*, the sophomore release from Phuturestix is set to drop in England early this year and Zed and Injekta are positioned to experience quite a payoff in 2006.

The duo began working together in 1998, dropping a dark, edgy single called "Crazy," the first of many collaborations that skirted the boundaries of contemporary club music. "We weren't the same as other people making two-step at the time," said Zed. "We were a little different. A lot of our sounds and style sounded a lot like American house. We brought in a bit of darkness."

While they continued to record individually, the Phuturestix project began to build steam and attract attention, especially after two EPs and the 2003 release of their debut album, *Feel It Out* (Hospital). The record reinforced the duo's reputation for focusing on moving music forward, as opposed to the scene's obsession with pomp and posing. "We still don't believe in all the flashiness," said Injekta. "We're all about the music. People were all about the style or the clothes in the club and we had our minds on other things."

That included their relationship with their label. Feeling confident in their abilities and slightly discouraged by the lack of complete freedom that any label deal entails, the duo decided they had had enough. "It was a case of going to the shop and buying all your food and having someone else cook it up," Zed explains. "We were getting really good reviews and everyone was buzzing about our music but we

weren't getting the sales figures we felt we deserved. We thought we should just take it all on board ourselves."

Phuture Lounge was borne of their desire to control their own future. Zed and Injekta already had a functioning studio in Manchester, and immediately began attracting a diverse roster, including soulful UK vocalist Vaceo and Michelle Amador, a San-Francisco-based, classically-trained pianist who has since drifted towards more jazzy compositions. Everybody has a personal style, according to Zed, but all share a similar musical background and can appreciate each other's record collections. "They're like long lost cousins," said Injekta. "They're part of the family. And we think we have to keep the family entertained."

They also keep the family busy. Phuture Lounge released three singles in 2005, including a track by the Manchester funk band LTA and "Comin' For Ya" by songstress Mpho Skeef; the latter was nominated by Gilles Peterson's Worldwide Show for song of the year, but that's merely a prelude. Albums by Amador, Vaceo and Turkish/German songwriter Oezlem are all in the queue for 2006.

Breathe Some Light itself deserves attention as a showcase of the label's depth. Featuring plenty of cameos along with their own slick production, it shines light on the direction of the label and the duo's maturing studio skills. "When we first made music we were adding a more deep, gritty vibe to two-step," says Zed. "Now, perhaps, we've mellowed a bit. Now we can record live instruments and singers and use large harmony sections."

This new, larger sound—which incorporates Phuturestix's love of classic soul and the smooth synth sounds of early jungle—is a perfect platform for label vocalists to utilize. "Fly Away," featuring the fluttering vocals of Fyza, is a swirling soul workout, buoyed by tightly-wound drumbeats. Tracks like "Cohiba" and "Hurt U Twice" have a propulsive feel that clearly paints the group as Bugz in the Attic contemporaries.

Injekta and Zed hope buzz for the album and the label spreads overseas, and want to see a domestic U.S. release of *Breathe Some Light* by mid-year. "We've got a lot of respect for American artists like the Platinum Pied Pipers and Sa-Ra," Zed offers. "We're ready to go to America and work. We want to get the word out."

www.phuturelounge.com



Phuturestix: Mr. J. Injekta and Zed Bias

ITALIAN STATIONS

PHOTOGRAPHER:
Giulia Mazza
PHOTO ASSISTANT:
Johnathan James Clancy
STYLIST:
Michael Cohn
HAIR & MAKE-UP:
Michael Cohn
MODELS:
Luigi of The Valentines
Cristal of Forty Winks
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OPPOSITE PAGE
Luigi (left): Top Raf Simmons, Pants Raf Simmons, Vintage hat and scarf Stylist's own; **Cristal:** Top Duffer of St. George, Pants Raf Simmons

THIS PAGE
Luigi: Overcoat Raf Simmons, Hoodie Fake London, Vest Jean's Paul Gaultier, Pants 40 West, Boots Moma Italy; **Cristal:** Coat Raf Simmons, Top Jean's Paul Gaultier, Vest Raf Simmons, Pants Raf Simmons, Vintage horsehair belt Stylist's own, Boots Fiorentini & Baker



THIS PAGE

Luigi: Top Jean's Paul Gaultier, **Jeans** Nudie Jeans, **Shoes** Converse All-Stars;
Leo the Barber: Top Leftfield NYC, **Jeans** Lee, **Belt and boots** Walker

OPPOSITE PAGE

Cristal: Top Raf Simmons, **Underwear** Intimissimi, **Boots** Fiorentini & Baker





OPPOSITE PAGE

Luigi: Shirt Raf Simmons, Vest Jean's Paul
Gaultier, Pants Raf Simmons, Shoes Fiorentini &
Baker, Vintage tie Stylist's own

THIS PAGE

Cristal: Outfit Raf Simmons, Shoes Ducals Milano,
Vintage leather tie Stylist's own, Belt Model's own
Giulia: Jacket Diesel, Dress Patrizia Pepe, Boots
Fornarina, Stockings Model's own

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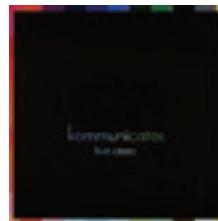
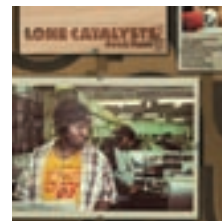
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LONE CATALYSTS
GOOD MUSIC
BUKA/US/CD

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THINK MIDWEST HIP-HOP IS ALL ABOUT KANYE AND COMMON? THINK AGAIN.

Stand on any rooftop from Cincinnati to Pittsburgh and you'll see miles of disabled smokestacks, cold-steel antennae, imposing factories—the bumpy lunar landscape of post-industrial America. The region's cities, grown rapidly around mills and rivers, follow no grid, no plan, pockmarked by long-emptied lots and cramped quarters. These places—Lone Catalysts' Pittsburgh and Columbus, and Five Deez' Cincinnati—spawn strange sounds and stranger dreams: the relentless chug and churn of the factory, tempered by the confused, chaotic winding and whirl of river and road.

Maybe that's why Five Deez' *Kommunicator* opens with such a Euro cab ride of a title track—existentialist gangsta lyrics flowed over tough 808-clap syncopation. And why Lone Catalysts' *Good Music* can be as rhythmically chaotic as the Art Blakey-ish tom rolls of "The Right" and as boom-bap as the crackly crate-dug samples on "One's We Miss." But there's another factor in their geography that allows for such musical liberation. East of the Kanye/Common corridor, West of the Queens-Atlanta highway, those in hip-hop's barren heartland live without much hope of Bentley or bling. Rather, they put those energies into a more obscure cause: musical creativity.

Lone Catalysts know their weaknesses and strengths on *Good Music*. Weaknesses: promptness. *Good Music* has been an absurd three years in the making, a fact J. Rawls and J. Sands allude to with the opening Graham Central Station sample. Strengths: everything else. Lone Catalysts glue together thick chunks of acidic jazz samples, funk breaks and fine rare grooves, making rhythms alternately soulful and tough-funky enough for Sands and guests like Masta Ace and Mix Master Ice from UTFO to spit hard-woven lyrics over. *Good Music* may be precise and ultimately old-school in its production, but it never takes the easy way out; even when fronting to their detractors, Lone Cat's do so over a stuttering Rawls beat that might cause even like-minded producers such as Jay Dee or the

Deez's Fat Jon to jump back. (Sands: "Hear it on the radio, video show/those niggaz ain't got dough, more or less hoes/cuz they love good music ... hip-hop and soul but not the bullshit.")

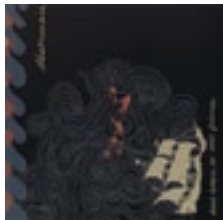
Kommunicator comes from a similar mindset, but musically couldn't be more different: meandering synths, Bristol-school downtempo beats and washes, lyrics and production reminiscent of everyone from Mr. Lif to 4Hero. If Five Deez set out to teach contemporary hip-hop a lesson in production class and sonic style, mission accomplished. As long as somebody listens. Drop "BMW" on the radio, and that just might happen—a joint effort between top-down big bass beats, electro-sultry female backings and some of Deez' most accessible lyrics. (Accessible, not simple: in one verse, "BMW" references Buddhism and cars, as it pronounces "They say BMW's a black man's wish/they need to add a couple mil" and some chicks to the list."). But despite trunk-rattling beats and flows ("Fugg That"), *Kommunicator* is much more likely to blow up a London bashment or a club in Berlin—where Fat Jon created many of the record's backdrops—than the streets of Atlanta.

With *Good Music* and *Kommunicator* in hand it's hard not to think that the future of hip-hop lies in the rust belt. Whether the rest of America is ready to embrace that future, only time will tell. *Justin Hopper*



SA-RA
THE SECOND TIME AROUND
 Sound In Color/US/CD

Sa-Ra has been whoring around with indie labels from LA to Japan with aplomb for the past year and change, birthing some of the most mind-bending intergalactic funk this side of the Milky Way. Titillating the masses with this six-song appetizer of an EP (also available as a gatefold double-vinyl set), it's easy to see how these dudes constructed such a formidable buzz in the blink of an eye. So as we anxiously await their G.O.O.D./Kanye West debut long player, here's a few delicacies from their cosmic slop bucket. The fun jumps off with endorsements from Pharoahe Monch (on the ode to cunninglingus, "Fish Fillet") and beatsmith J Dilla, who tosses verses on "Thrilla." But the real treat comes in the form of "Smokeless Highs," a delicious throwback to the neck snapping mid-'90s track work of DJ Premier and Large Professor. Not the full-length you've been salivating for, but worth the saliva nonetheless. *Rico "Superbizzee" Washington*



1-SPEED BIKE
SOMEONE TOLD ME LIFE GETS EASIER IN YOUR 50'S
 Brooklyn Beats/US/CD

"We can talk about economists, doctors, managers, lawyers and bureaucrats, but that would be too fucking boring," Aidan Girt carps in a pause from the breakbeats he splatters on a White House wall. The drummer for chamber-rockers God Speed You! Black Emperor makes a spectacular ass out of himself in his breakcore excursion as 1-Speed Bike. You don't even need to listen to this album to understand what it's about—witness song titles like "If You Were a McDonald's, Your Lips Would Be an Orange Soda, but Your Dick Would Be a Shriveled-up Fry." However, he is a deft swordsman on the trapkit, where he instills a loose, duct-taped funk usually missing in the bludgeons of breakcore. While his politics are written above an elementary school urinal (i.e. "I'm handsome like Donald Rumsfeld"), Girt's music is a B-movie worth a thousand midnight showings. *Cameron Macdonald*

ALL GOOD FUNK ALLIANCE
ON THE ONE
 Sunswept/US/CD

Funkateers Frank Cueto and Rusty Belicek have worked on perfecting their take on funky breaks via their DC-based Funk Weapons

label. With *On the One*, their full-length debut as All Good Funk Alliance, they attempt to bring in multiple musical strands and bind them together. True to form, there are enough cuts here to rock your house. Whether it's the smoldering, head-nodding vibes of "Who's That" or the playful stride of the Latin-infused "Queres Bailar," the album knows how to get its bad self going. *On the One* contains champion sounds good enough for one party after another. *Velanche*

ASAMOV
AND NOW...

6 Hole/US/CD
 Jacksonville's Asamov is the first act from outside the North Carolina-based Justus League camp on baseball pro Desi Relaford's 6Hole Records—not surprisingly, "Florida's Little Brother" fits right in. Sure, the tunes turned out by up-and-coming beatsmith Willie Evans, Jr. (The Perceptionists, Rasco), MCs J-Wonda and Basic and DJ/producer Therapy tap into a familiar vibe with their Motown samples and recycling of classic hip-hop lines, but in some ways their debut LP one-ups LB's *The Minstrel Show*. For one thing, album highlight "Supa Dynamite" (featuring Mr. Lif) is more of an anthem than anything on that good-not-great album. But, like most of today's underground hip-hop, *And Now...* doesn't think enough outside of the box. *Jesse Serwer*

THOMAS BRINKMANN
LUCKY HANDS

max.Ernst/GER/CD
 This prolific minimal techno magus' follow-up to 2004's challenging *Tokyo+1* (musique concrète techno partially composed of field recordings foraged from that city) actually more closely resembles his R&B/funk-loop-driven Soul Center project; opening track "Drops" chugs into Soul Center's experimental house mode, with recessive funk and R&B genes lending it surprising flavor. Overall, *Lucky Hands* is Brinkmann's most song-oriented effort, with partner Tusia Beridze singing on four tracks, including the strange cover of Morrissey's "The More You Ignore Me," which sounds like a deadpan Flying Lizard deconstruction. The disc peaks with "Margins," a hypnotic dub trudge that recalls Talking Heads' chilling "Listening Wind." *Dave Segal*

THE BUDOS BAND
THE BUDOS BAND

Daptone/US/CD
 On its debut disc, the Staten Island-based Budos Band represents Shaolin with a varied set of funk instrumentals. It's a groovy set for damn sure, with timekeeping as tight as a Swiss watch and flowing horns that roll like waves rather than puncturing songs with staccato stabs. Tracks like "Eastbound" bring some Afro-Caribbean rhythms to bear on the band's laid-back approach, as a Latin trumpet line softly speaks above the mix. Elsewhere, "Aynotchesh Yererfu" bottoms out with blaring saxophones that nod at Afro-beat. While nothing here shines brightly or makes a case for the band outshining its influences, The Budos Band will get your head-nodding nonetheless. *Patrick Sisson*

COLLABS 3000
METALISM

Novamute/US/CD
 A continuation of Dutch producer Speedy J's "Collabs" series, *Metalism* pairs the techno contortionism of J with the skills of German pümpmeister Chris Liebing. At first moist, springy and skittering, *Metalism* grafts on linear, aggro crunch by track four, "Hilt"—featuring a distinctly Teutonic, steely grind that lopes while not quite achieving Cologne's *schaffle* shuffle (almost reprised in "Cream 3"). For several tracks, imagine a piston-mounted sponge encrusted with broken glass relentlessly buffing a marble floor. These are peak-hour steam bath beats, the kind that flare searing sweat across palpitating temples. Following is a pixilated couplet—minimalisms glistening dusklily like a post-apocalyptic aurora borealis—before the disc concludes with the chiming, locomotive "Tricco Live." Insistent is the final word that comes to mind. *Tony Ware*

COLOSSUS
WEST OAKTOWN REMIXES

OM/US/CD
 On this double disc release, producer Charlie Tate and his Colossus crew take on two very different styles of hip-hop. On disc one, Tate crafts ultra-chill jazz and soul-fueled beats, which MCs including Oakland's Azeem and London's Roots Manuva fluidly rap over. On disc two, the *West Town Remixes*, Ed Shrager joins Tate to liven things up with some thumping, neck-snapping beats. Musically, disc one features productions that are more refined... but not necessarily better sounding—in fact, it's hard not to be drawn to the heavy basslines of the high-powered remix disc. *Max Herman*

JOHN DAHLBÄCK
MAN FROM THE FALL

Systematic/GER/CD
 With 20+ releases this year, 20-year-old Swede John Dahlbäck (Jesper's cousin) seems unstoppable as he offers his second album, the first through Marc Romboy's Systematic imprint. In keeping with the label's aesthetic, Dahlbäck crafts bumpin' electro-house that works best in the Chicago jack of "Take Me Back" or the sawtooth melodies of "My Love for Machines." Shades of Underworld—intricate, driving rhythms and large hooks—permeate the album, especially on the simple yet effectively quirky "Day of the Night" or the anthemic "It Feels So Good," but what you're getting here is pure dancefloor creativity from one of the most promising talents on the planet. *Mike Battaglia*

DEAF CENTER
PALE RAVINE

Type/UK/CD
 Capitalizing on the gossamer promise of their "Neon City" EP, Norwegian duo Deaf Center issues this stunning meditation on memory and performance. With soundscaping prowess that makes David Lynch seem like a pansy, Deaf Center sublimates the familiar sounds of a perfectly precise slo-mo orchestra with the tactile textures of everyday sound, assimilating the hushed clatter of each passing day's non-events into an absorbing electro-classical whole. A compelling listen, slowly revealing its layered secrets, *Pale Ravine* is one aural gorge worth lengthy exploration. *Brian Paul*

DÉSORMAIS
DEAD LETTERS TO LOST FRIENDS

Intr-Version/CAN/CD
 Désormais travels down a highway during its 27th hour on the road, the tail lights ahead bleeding together and seeming to lift you off the ground toward the heavens where you believe you'll soon be. Core members Mitchell Akiyama and Joshua Treble embody that sensation with digitally smeared guitar tones and rhythms that fall in and out of sleep. "One or Many Wolves" drifts to a hypnotic mutant-disco pulse, while the Fennesz-like guitar excursion "Drowning in Place" simply falls to the ground and daydreams under a fog the sun never cracks through. The standout, "I Wore Water Wings But the Chlorine Still Stings," takes a wafting guitar ballad and smothers it with samples of a dry cleaner. It's awfully beautiful, mind you. *Cameron Macdonald*

TILMAN EHRHORN
HEADING FOR THE OPEN SPACES

Resopal Schallware/GER/CD
 On *Heading For The Open Spaces*, modern jazz musician Tilman Ehrhorn eschews the huffing and puffing of his saxophone for deftly deployed "micro-fragments of designer samples." With its sleeve-images of forests and lichen-covered trees, it would be easy to perceive the release as an attempt to replicate the ambience of a solo walk in the woods, with Ehrhorn's fidgety clicks and snaps the aural equivalent of footsteps through fallen pine needles, cracked twigs and the scurrying of disturbed wildlife. On the album's most gratifying tracks, however, something more complex than imitation is going on. Ehrhorn allows trace elements of funk to seep through his digital debris, creating something oft-magical. *David Hemingway*

EXILE
PRO AGONIST

Planet Mu/UK/CD
 Manic in the extreme but wonderfully clean, Exile is the whiz kid sitting at the back of the class between Hellfish and End.user—he makes dogfight sounds but still walks away with an A. Too chopped up to stay in the d&b scene, Planet Mu welcomed him into its family and he gave them a riotous album. All synths going off at crazy angles, growls, grinds and drum crashes, *Pro Agonist* rockets along at breakneck tempo with a few bits of crazed ambient to break it up. A twisted metal sound war in an album of party jamz. *Matt Earp*

HEAD-ROC
NEGROPHOBIA!

Chocolate City/US/CD
 Let's face it: overtly political music is usually wack, and don't even talk to me about Cornel West. But now, Head-Roc is here to inherit the political rap mantle from Public Enemy, an appropriate position for this D.C. native. With an eye towards flow and hot, swinging beats, Head-Roc tackles issues as diverse as the legacy of slavery, modern day Black empowerment and imperialism from Christopher Columbus to George Bush without preaching or putting heads to bed. Noam Chomsky himself would dig Roc's whispered Ying-Yangism foray into the sticky politics of the Middle East on "Free Palestine"—somebody email him an mp3! *Rob Geary*

HELL
GROSSENWAHN 1992-1995

International DeeJay Gigolo/GER/CD
 With his 13-year career, techno DJ Hell has more than earned his retrospective disc (with bonus remix CD). But if this set points out how long and fruitful a life this DJ/producer/label boss has had, it also highlights how viscerally his work should be experienced. Tracks like "Definition of House," with synths layered over a driving beat, and the dark, vocodered "Suicide Commando" sound meant for engaging your whole body on the dancefloor, not playing on your living room stereo. Still, "Je Regrette Everything," an electro torch song, sounds good anywhere. *Luciana Lopez*

HOT CHIP
COMING ON STRONG

Astralwerks/US/CD
 Does funk still groove when it's muted and mumbled? Much of *Coming on Strong* sounds like the fake songs that Casio keyboards play when the demo key is pushed, with half-hearted lyrics slurred by a legion of ennui-affected hipsters. But listen closely and ignore the occasional bubbly lullaby, and you'll delight in an album of sarcastic, sleepy soul. This exhausted yet effervescent music, made for slumping on the couch at the end of the night, hides some indulgently wicked lyrics. Who else brags about rollin' with 20-inch rims while blasting Yo La Tengo out the subs or softly croons "Who let the dogs out?" *Patrick Sisson*

JAMALSKI
RUFFNECKS REVENGE

Ozore Age/FRA/CD
 Jungle MC albums are a hard sell and hyper-kinetic Jamalski's unending delivery trips over its own flow as often as it excites the audience."Devil Dandruff" rolls out well but the rest is mired in French D&B's obsession with posturing synth lines over good old beats and bass. Producers like Soper, Capital J and even Future Prophecies don't bring the energy needed to make it work, and Jamalski is left holding the bag. *Matt Earp*

JAN JELINEK
KOSMISCHER PITCH

~scape/GER/CD
 Leaving the precision mathematics of his Farben material behind, Jelinek returns to Stefan Betke's ~scape label, descending deeper than ever before into superbly disconnected territory. All formulaic constraints removed, the album unfolds like an uninterrupted daydream. The soft, cycling cadence of "Planeten In Halbrauer" and "Vibraphonspulen" rolls weightlessly alongside tracks like "Lithiummelodie 1" and "Western Mimikry," which draw on fragments of obscure instrumentation and calm, melodic facsimiles to continue the hypnotic orbit of the work as a whole. Starry-eyed and spontaneous, *Kosmischer Pitch* steps out through the space-shuttle door and doesn't look back. *Doug Morton*



LINDSTROM & PRINS THOMAS
LINDSTROM & PRINS THOMAS
 Eskimo/BEL/CD

Head off into space with the Norwegian kings of new disco. From sprightly keys to perkily plucked guitars vaguely reminiscent of lost Hall & Oates tracks, this is disturbingly hummable electronic music, completely innocuous but somehow totally irresistible. Even when the pair toys around with country-western stylings ("Don O Van Bud" and "Naa Er Druene Paa Sitt Beste") that verge on kitsch, a loving attention to dubbed out detail reminds you that they're not having fun at your expense—they're just having fun. *Peter Nicholson*



JIRKU-JUDGE PRIVATE EYES

Onitor/GER/CD

No, it's not a techno boffin cover of Hall and Oates, but it's something nearly as pleasurable and without any postmodern ironic smarm. Abstract techno masters Tomas Jirku and Robin Judge meet up for an easy-going collaboration that gets both the big picture and the little details right. The echoing rhythms owe equally to minimal techno and Timbaland, while the tinny-yet-catchy lead melodies of tracks like "Double Trouble" sound like the 8-bit chipset reconfigured for a packed dancefloor. *Rob Geary*



JÓHANN JÓHANNSON DIS

Workers Institute/ICL/CD

Specializing in shimmering electronic music, Johann Jóhannsson strikes a vein that's already been mined by many musicians, Icelandic or otherwise (slow, moody piano playing, anyone?). But *Dis*, the soundtrack to a film by Icelandic author Sijja Hauksdottir, exemplifies Jóhannsson's compositional chops, subtly repeating motifs and themes with sounds that slope as gradually as snowdrifts. Peppy and grandiose like *Vanilla Sky's* saccharine score, the album would do wonders as a companion to stunning cinematography. The snappy rock theme "Efrípides Og Nedrípides" is a high moment, full of crisscrossing electronics and a strummed guitar. But as a stand-alone CD, *Dis* is a little too plodding and precious. *Patrick Sisson*



Shawn Brackbill

RIS PAUL RIC PURPLE BLAZE

Academy Fight Song/US/CD

You've gotta hand it to Christopher Paul Richards. As singer/guitarist for D.C.-based Dischord groove punks Q And Not U, one might've listed him in the "see ya at the reunion" column when the band went its separate ways. But here he comes with *Purple Blaze*, a solo debut that retains the best parts of Q And Not U's beloved sound—the acoustic punk funk of *Power*, the Prince obsession—and bathes it in a unique wash of XTC-esque West Coast mod melody and Quebecois electronic punk surrealism. (The latter thanks, in part, to resident Alien8'er Tim Hecker, who helped produce *Blaze*.) A buried treasure of folk-funk-punk-pop-psychedelia. *Justin Hopper*

KING KONG

RUMBLE JUMBLE LIFE

Massive B/US/CD

This Bobby Konders-curated collection features unsung dancehall pioneer King Kong voicing several decades worth of classic riddims, from Cuss Cuss ("Rumble Jumble Life") to Stalag ("Call Mr. Madden") and Penicillin ("They Don't Know"). While the tunes are roots consciousness all the way, Kong sounds just as good on bouncier recent dancehall riddims like Wanted, upon which he tackles the sociology behind today's out-of-control youth for the tune "Bag Juice (And Cheese Chips)." Kong might epitomize dancehall's old school, but with his Tenor Saw-like warble and creative approach to standard lyrical themes ("Call Mr. Madden" warns the famed Jamaican coffinmaker that defeated soundbwoys are headed his way), everything sounds timeless. *Jesse Serwer*

MALCOM KIPE LIT

Merck/US/CD

Texas beat-wrangler Skyler McGlothlin steps outside his experimental mode as Nautilus (Planet Mu) to rev-up for another full-length instrumental hip-hop outing on Florida's Merck imprint. Eclectic, crate-dug rhythms and samples get the dirty MPC work-over as the impeccably selected raw material—ranging from sensual and obscure jazz snippets to Gregorian chants to spacey mid-'70s god-knows-what—gets nailed down with some good old Jetta-pumpin' beats. MC-ready, *Lit* rolls with a superb, repetitive flow while sustaining a cerebral quality that makes for a rich living room experience as well. Add a beanbag chair and a Dutch, and you got yourself a Sunday afternoon. *Doug Morton*

LACKLUSTER

WHAT YOU WANT ISN'T WHAT YOU NEED

New Speak/SWE/CD

A peculiar album from Finnish IDM artist Esa Ruoho, *What You Want* starts unremarkably, through some "Idiotique"-ish beating around the bush before showing what he's got on "Hiatus," which bubbles with originality and energy. It's a jarring lead-in to "Down," conjuring a journey through dark and ominous country roads, which is Ruoho's Lynchian intention. Its electro-ambient follower, "N," is a contrast of such beauty that you brace for the next devil's curve, but from here on out the ride is smooth. The music-box instrumentation of "The Cluster Theme" glistens with just enough grit, and before frenetic closer "Dropouts," Ruoho hints that he's listened to The Cure's *Disintegration* at least once. Ultimately, a disjointed collection with a few satisfying highlights. *Rachel Shimp*

MICALL PARKNSUN THE WORKING CLASS DAD

Low Life/UK/CD

DIRTY DIGGERS FREAKISHLY STRONG

Zebra Traffic/UK/CD

More hope for UK hip-hop here! Micall Parknsun speaks on supporting his family—along with blasting weak hip-hop and detailing an MC's struggle to stay virtuous—while piling on internal rhymes like a Brit Biggie; his flow ranges from declamatory to soothing, depending on what the track demands. Parknsun's bright, uptempo beats (with occasional rock and soul touches) work without chasing after trends. So do Dirty Diggers, a two-man team who swap off on mic and production duties on their album-length EP. The crackly beat-digger loops run pleasingly fast to accommodate the Digger's quick flows, as on the hip-hop-as-sacrament "Daily Bread." *Rob Geary*

MOONDOG

THE VIKING OF SIXTH AVENUE

Honest Jon's/UK/CD

Like Sun Ra, Lee Perry and composer Harry Partch, Moondog was an eccentric visionary that pushed the outer limits of recorded sound. A multi-instrumentalist and occasional vocalist from Kansas that lost his eyesight to dynamite at age 16, Moondog arrived in New York in 1944, living on the street, donning elaborate Viking hats and fashioning homemade instruments. He began releasing astoundingly individual self-produced work from 1949, much of it incorporating Native American rhythms, and was also one of the first to experiment with rudimentary overdubs using two tape machines. These 36 short vignettes, drawn from his lengthy career, are infinitely fascinating slices of abstract jazz: there are vocal rounds, drumming puns, double-bass duels and more—in short, essential listening. *David Katz*

CEDRIC "CONGO" MYTON

INNA DE YARD

Pressure Sounds/UK/CD

Inna De Yard is a series of acoustic sessions recorded live in the yard of renowned guitarist Chinna Smith, the idea being to present roots reggae the way it was originally created. The latest installment features the warbling falsetto of Congos leader Cédric Myton, accompanied by Skatalites trumpeter Dizzy Moore, singer Kiddus I and unsorted unknowns. While the recording certainly has a raw feel, it sometimes could have benefited from the improved editing that a studio setting affords: the original Black Ark recording of "Congoman" may be an all-time classic, but the extremely loose version presented here seems excessively long at over 11 minutes. Elsewhere there are moments of brilliance and the DVD bonus track brings home the session's intimacy. *David Katz*

CONRAD NEWHOLMES

PEPPERMINT STYLES

Couchblip!/AUS/CD

A one-inch scratch across this CD's surface actually improved a few of Mr. Newholmes' songs, which were made more alive with funkier double-time rhythms and vocals diced into split-second bits. That says something about this otherwise second-rate imitation of RJD2. The elements are all here: "earthy" hip-hop rhythms set to a chain-gang hammer pace, good-timey funk riffs and the dorky lke-era samples of folkies jabbering about nothing. However, our man surprises with the Bach electro-funk of "Earth Dirt the Champ," the bongo sputters of "King Sucks" and, best of all, the Caterpillar-breakdance jaunt "Beat Down Streets." Hopefully, Conrad will learn from his mistakes. *Cameron Macdonald*

NICOLETTE

LIFE LOVES US

Early/UK/CD

Dreamy, psychedelic, swirls abruptly—almost randomly—punctuated by chipmunk-speed African drums, glitchy 100 mph mechanized riddims, trunk-rattling basses: Nicolette's *Life Loves Us* is simply the most instinctively free music to still be within a jazz tradition since Coltrane's "My Favorite Things." Skeletonized, these songs might adhere to the normal world's standards: "Sunshine" might approach jazz standard-dom; the come-hither "Jenny," pop; "I Am Where the Party's At," deep house or R&B. But Nicolette's borderline-schizophrenic history—Scottish born, Nigerian parents; former collaborator with both Massive Attack and Shut Up and Dance—takes the reins, resulting in an album as optimistically liberating as it is psychotically original. *Justin Hopper*

OMEGA ONE

THE LO-FI CHRONICLES

Nature Sounds/US/CD

Omega One's production is all over the place—and that's a good thing. Most of the 15-tracker meshes eclectic samples with gritty drums and seamless sequencing. Tracks like "Memento" and "Mom's Revolver" demonstrate tip-top technique and a near flawless execution, while "Cliff Banger" is a showcase of Omega's knack for clean scratching. Charismatic numbers like "Body Double" and "Paper Bag Boxer" are able to bump and be soothing simultaneously. Although mostly known for his collaborations with Aesop Rock, *The Lo-Fi Chronicles* proves that Omega One is more than capable of carrying an album by himself. *David Ma*

AUGUSTUS PABLO

KING DAVID'S MELODY

Shanachie/US/CD

The late Augustus Pablo was not only a dub master—he was a multifaceted musician. As heard on *King David's Melody*, he utilized everything from the melodica to the xylophone to create an assortment of tranquil instrumentals that transport you to another time and place. From the moment that first note hits your speaker on songs like "Revelation Time," it becomes easy to forget about your worries and get carried away by the calming Caribbean melodies. Faulty mixing, wherein the volume varies considerably from track to track, often interrupts the tranquility. That aside, this album serves as a nice addition to Augustus' sizeable discography. *Max Herman*

PRINCE FAR I

SILVER & GOLD: 1973-1979

Blood and Fire/UK/CD

From the infinite vaults of UK re-issues giant Blood and Fire, *Silver & Gold* collects rare dubs and versions from Prince Far I's golden years, recorded primarily for his own Cry Tuff label. If you know Far I, you know the story: gruff, gravelly stream-of-consciousness toasting that, despite its often arrhythmic qualities, was always intrinsically musical. "The Voice of Thunder" truly was the king of the deejays, as tracks like "Let

Jah Arise," a bass-heavy production by Enos McLeod, and "Jah Dub Version" ("Cesar, Cesar Marrero, you know that man Cesar?") will attest. There's nothing particularly noteworthy to recommend *Silver* over any previous Far I collection, but it's a solid addition nonetheless. *Jesse Serwer*

QWEL & JACKSON JONES

DARK DAY

Galapagos4/US/CD

Rapper Qwel and beatsmith Jackson Jones have tailored an album that typifies Galapagos4's spirited releases. Qwel's raps are insightful and vigorous as ever, while Jones' melancholy beats are a perfect compliment. "Vincent Van Gogh Coke Ad" and "A Beautiful Thing" triumph as the album's finest moments. However, the project's gloomy nature grows unsettling midway through and is dead tiresome by the end. "Dark Day" and "Spit Your Lit" reflect effort, but are tedious downers, as is most of the project. Although Qwel and Jones are obviously sincere artists, *Dark Day* is simply an unmemorable listen. *David Ma*

SADAT X

EXPERIENCE & EDUCATION

Female Fun/US/CD

As part of Brand Nubian, Sadat laced his rhymes with enough grime to satisfy the street as well as the Zulu Nation. On this joint, he writes music for folks who grew up listening to Brand Nubian. The 9-to-5-ers *and* the 25-to-lifers will appreciate his testimony to

survival on the DJ Spinna-produced "God is Back." With help from Diamond D ("The Great Diamond D") and Vin the Chin ("Back to New York"), Sadat reveals the gritty soul that's the core of Big Apple hip-hop. Overall, this everyman MC proves, as he says on "Have a Good Life," that he "can still kick a mean 16." *James Mayo*

SECRET MOMMY

VERY REC

Ache/CAN/CD

Six months worth of clandestine field recordings, ranging from tennis and basketball courts to ice-skating rinks and child daycare centers, are the starting point for one of the most entertaining electronic albums to come down the pike in years. You can truly appreciate the sound of a public swimming pool once it's been digitally obliterated and re-fabricated in a vivacious, bit-zapped format that you can bug out to in your car. This concept would only be cool for a few minutes if it weren't for Mommy's brilliantly spastic and deeply perceptive production style...which makes it really, really cool—for the full 44 minutes, that is. *Doug Morton*

ULRICH SCHNAUSS

FAR AWAY TRAINS PASSING BY

Domino/US/CD

The music of Ulrich Schnauss is a bit like teenage love: blissful, cloying, fairly predictable. But damn is it beautiful! This re-release of Schnauss' first album, including a bonus disc of rarities, serves up more of the high points from 2003's *A Strangely Isolated Place*—



BLUE SCHOLARS

BLUE SCHOLARS

Blue Scholars/US/CD

Driven in part by their parents' blue-collar work ethic, Seattle's MC Geologic and producer/DJ Sabzi of Blue Scholars dropped their magnetic self-titled debut last year without any cameos, collabos or the support of a big-name label. For everyone that wasn't lucky enough to catch this album the first time around, the pair now re-releases a revamped version with three brand-new tracks. One of them is the thought provoking, "No Rest For The Weary," in which Geo raps, "40 to a class?/No wonder we delinquent/half the school district never make it to commencement." With his intelligent inquiries and down-to-earth approach, Geo rarely fails to raise ears. Meanwhile, Sabzi's lively jazz and ethnic string-driven loops prove to be just as captivating. To think this duo has only been working together for three years—one can only imagine what they'll accomplish in another three. *Max Herman*



swirling melodies, sparkling production and big hip-hop beats—but with less of the overt homage to shoegaze bands like Slowdive. As such, it's a more enjoyable album, with the hissing majesty of tracks like "...Passing By" achieving a sweet grandeur of their own. *Peter Nicholson*

SOFA SURFERS
SOFA SURFERS

Klein/AUS/CD

Viennese quartet Sofa Surfers makes music that is almost purposefully run-of-the-mill. It's as though—after past experiments with dub, hip-hop and electronic sounds—the band has decided that the only thing keeping '90s post-rock from being the ultimate musical sound was that damn experimentation. Even on the best songs—like the hypnotic but ultimately tiring "Never Go Back"—mild lyrics and bland guitars wax poetic over odd time signatures, making a sound that is at once technically intricate, beautifully delicate and utterly forgettable. Full of potential never fulfilled. *Justin Hopper*



SUPREMEEX
NUNTYPE

Rumble Pack/US/CD

Like Biggie, SupremeEx has a story to tell. But it isn't your typical rap story—it's more of an epic sci-fi tale with heavy anime influences and talk of advanced technology and primitive species. If that sounds "too nerdy" to you, slow your roll; the music is the real story, and this is devastatingly effective headphone material. S.Ex is a painstakingly precise producer with a carefully crafted signature sound: taut rhythm sections with plenty of electronic bleeps and bloops and great arrangements, but none of glitch-hop's ugliness. Souls of Mischief's Tajai advances the story verbally, but the music is the perfect *mise en scène*. *Pete Babb*



ELIOT LIPP

ELIOT LIPP
TACOMA MOCKINGBIRD

Hefty/US/CD

So much instrumental hip-hop just goes up in smoke—not so with Eliot Lipp's second album. *Tacoma Mockingbird* has beats that stick to the ribs, crispy fried snares and bass drum booms thick like gravy, and it has melodies that twine in the mind, uncoiling analog tendrils that will tickle days after the last spin. Lipp is one of the few producers who can write keyboard lines with hooks as huge as any sample—check the squirming lead of "Rap Tight" (which also features an excellent stuttered breakdown) or the tension between the pop-locking synths and their three-note backing figure on "Sex Tapes." Even when Lipp lifts a beat ("Vallejo" is a dead ringer for Massive Attack's "Five Man Army," whose beat they probably stole from someone else), he makes it his own with a heady electro sheen that doesn't lose its luster, even after repeated listens. *Peter Nicholson*

ANDI TEICHMANN
FADES

Festplatten/GER/CD

Techno and indie rock rarely make compatible bedfellows, but with *Fades*, Andi Teichmann attempts to foster seduction between the genres, and occasionally succeeds. "Myschkin" makes a great initial impression with warped harpsichord drones, a bravura New Order bassline and poignant piano atop a brawny midtempo techno rhythm. As *Fades* progresses, Kohl-eyed ballads with pensively strummed acoustic guitar and wispy male vocals vie for dominance with elegant 4/4 bangers full of dramatic swerves and abrasive textures, splitting the difference between Alter Ego and Superpitcher. Sure it's schizo, but Teichmann's stab at this unlikely union often yields thrilling results. *Dave Segal*

THE TRAVELLERS
BLACK BLACK MINDS

Pressure Sounds/UK/CD

While searching for something or another, legendary producer King Jammy stumbled across a tape of vocal harmony group The Travellers. During the late '70s such outfits were finding their groove, as it were, alongside the hype of Black Uhuru. This quartet fuses the influence of Motown doo-wop with easy, repetitive reggae by the likes of Sly & Robbie. The background beats are solid, though not exceptional; the focus is on the lyrical architecture. Sweet-sounding soul abounds on tracks like "Know Yourself," though by record's end you've heard too much of the same thing, too often. *Derek Beres*

VECTOR LOVERS
CAPSULE FOR ONE

Soma/UK/CD

Electro's torrid and escapist love affair with outer space dates back to its '80s inception and on this gorgeously nostalgic LP, Vector Lover's Martin Wheeler does the originators' dream of interplanetary life one better. His precision-engineered bass, drifting synths and seething bleeps bleach away any traces of Bambaata's humanizing pre-MIDI vocodered robo-funk with music that could have come from nowhere but deep in one man's hard drive. Wheeler's predilection for IDM iciness and techno's recent galloping renaissance makes this one *Capsule* equally suited for solitary space walks or martian clubbing. *Brion Paul*

VVV
RESURRECTION RIVER

Mego/AUST/CD

"I'm knocking down the king's door/Yeah!/See for yourself, it's fate/Look out!" Alan Vega is yelping like a street preacher chasing ghosts down an SRO hallway. It makes sense that the ex-frontman of electro-punk icons Suicide would drink from the same bottle as Pan Sonic's Mika Vainio and Ilpo Väisänen. All of them flayed electronic music and kept the bones—creating a tension that their music will either suffocate to death or evaporate into abrupt silence. Here, Vega takes the fore, his usual undead Elvis persona delivering rockabilly sermons about lost souls on the bloodied American soil. The stronger pieces, "11:52 PM" and "Chrome-Z Fighters 2003," resemble Suicide classics dug from the grave and hastily re-animated. But overall, too much power is denied in *Resurrection*. *Cameron Macdonald*

WARRIOR KING
HOLD THE FAITH

VP/US/CD

On *Hold the Faith*, Warrior King talks up his Bible-derived spirituality so often he wouldn't seem out of place in Bush's White House. But it's not the Rasta evangelism or the mediocre production that annoys—rather, it's WK's penchant for mind-numbing clichés. On "Education" he chants: "Silver and gold will vanish away, but a good education will always stay." It's such less-than-rigorous writing that finds him unable to give us another "Virtuous Woman"—2001's sensational career-launching single. Unfortunately, *Hold the Faith* is not just an album title, but also an instruction to fans awaiting the next transcendent reggae talent. *Araya Crosskill*

SUSUMU YOKOTA & ROTHKO
DISTANT SOUNDS OF SUMMER

Lo/UK/CD

This collaboration between composer Yokota and Too Pure band Rothko features vocalist Caroline Ross, and all three equally shine. Opening with the hip-hop beat of "Deep in Mist," faraway pianos, elegant bass and lazy vocals prep for the mutations ahead—"Water's Edge" invokes the pagan poetry of Dead Can Dance, while "Path Fades Into Forest" is a warm, acoustic guitar-based track. Beats reappear in "Clear Space," where a harmonica is as affecting as Ross' voice. Susumu & Co. have built careers subverting preconceptions about sounds, and discovering new ways to put them together—their combined experience makes *Summer* golden. *Rachel Shimp*

MISSTRESS BARBARA
COME WITH ME...



NEW MIX CD IN STORES ON THE 7TH OF FEBRUARY

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TURBULENCE

**COMP
REVIEWS**

**THE BIGGEST ONE DROP
ANTHEMS 2005**
Greensleeves/UK/CD

STRICTLY THE BEST 34
VP/US/CD

CULTURE JUGGLING
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**WITH THE ROOTS
REGGAE REVIVAL GOING
FULL-STEAM AHEAD,
THREE COMPS ROPE
IN THE BEST OF THE
GENRE.**

Each year, dancehall seems to get bigger and bigger, and 2005 was no exception. Yet while Jr. Gong and Sean Paul set back-to-back records for US sales—moving almost 1.7 million units combined in two weeks—their crossover success has only whetted audiences' ears for more hardcore reggae and, in particular, for more conscious lyrics.

The trend toward more thoughtful and humanistic lyrical sentiments in the genre has been developing for some time, a cyclic wave cresting in response to war and rumors of war abroad—at press time, Ethiopia appeared on the verge of civil war (a matter of grave concern to Rastas) and the Iraq and Israeli-Palestinian situations also weighed heavy on the minds of many. Back a yard, like Jr. Gong said in his '05 anthem "Welcome To Jamrock," political violence "cyaan dun" and "poor people dead at random"—if not at the hands of gun-wielding thugs, then by police.

So how dem a go stop all the bombs and rockets? With sweet reggae music, naturally. Normally, dancehall compilations can make for somewhat suspect full-lengths, as they rely on juggling riddims that thrust the producer, rather than the artist, into the forefront. But the sheer amount of conscious material on *One Drop Anthems*, *Culture Juggling* and *STB 34* makes for a great deal of thematic consistency while putting the music's message first.

With 40 killer songs over two discs, you'll feel Greensleeves' compendium of one-drop (a term that describes the classic reggae rhythm arrangement of simultaneous rimshot and kick hits) songs, and get a sense of the sheer volume of great Jamaican music available now. This set is so strong, it buries blazers like Richie Spice & Chuck Fender's "Freedom" and Jah Mali's "Be Conscious" way down in the track listing. Easy star, there's no need to fast-forward past sufferer's tunes like Fantan Mojah's "Hungry," anti-violence statements like Buju Banton & Anthony Cruz's "Place Too Bloody" or affirmations of spiritual faith like



Lutan Fyah & Josie Mel's "Rasta Still Deh Bout."

On *Culture Juggling*, Brooklynite trackmaster Bobby Konders keeps his dreads natty with the Truth & Rights, Stormy Weather and Heavenless riddims, throwing in old-time favorite Tempo for good measure. Spice's haunting "Youths Are So Cold" is the top shotta on a riddim-driven album rounded out nicely by some of Bounty Killer and Elephant Man's more conscious statements, as well as banging tunes by Sizzla and longtime Massive B spar Burro Banton.

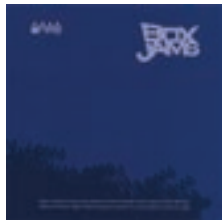
The revival of consciousness is even reflected in VP's latest *STB* set, which has occasionally failed to live up to the lofty standards set by the series in its first few glorious years. This time, *STB* sets a cool and deadly tone from jump with the triple shot of Jah Cure's "True Reflection," Gyptian's "Serious Times" and Richie Spice's "Righteous Youth," before moving on to conscious lovers rock tunes like Turbulence & Sasha's "We Have Got Love," Roger Robin's "Take it Slow" and Norris Man's "Home and Away."

Bottom line? Now that dancehall has recalibrated itself to focus yet again on righteous rebel music, there's only one thing left to do: rewind and come again, select! *Eric K. Arnold*



VERSATILE RECORDS: HOT SHOTS

Versatile/FRA/CD
Versatile's artists *heart* machines—warm ones, cool ones, ones that thump and think for themselves with a silicon slyness. Here, the usual suspects—I:Cube, Joakim, Chateau Flight—share some of their favorite artificial intelligences, half of them specially edited for this compilation. Basic Soul Unit blows up the techno waters with the torpedo that is "Surface and Submerge," Kirk Degiorgio (in his As One guise) unleashes analog artifacts with predictably warm results on "Rumour" and Joakim makes us all wonder when the album's going to drop, both with his careening car-chase of a remix for Chateau Flight's "Les Antipodes" and his own prancing, piercing "I Wish You Were Gone." Not sure if France has some special juice in its AC current, but this treat from the Versatile camp might be an argument that yes, androids do dream of electric sheep—dancing ones at that. *Peter Nicholson*



AURORA 2

Merck/US/CD
Sonically, little to nothing new is featured on Merck's latest ambient disc. Most of the synth patches are the same ones used by bedroom musicians who are just figuring out their desktop's plug-ins. Nonetheless, *Aurora 2* is engrossing for how its artists simply breathe. Sabi floats like gutter steam in a rainshower with the pattering beats and narcotic synth tones of "Dancing in a Rainstorm." Elsewhere, Kettel's guitar drones ignite a St. Elmo's Fire that glows for miles, while Ginormous levitates into the stratosphere with geothermic symphonics. Most striking is Twerk's "From Brown to Green," where a smooth R&B ballad twitches and struggles to correct itself like a lost space probe hovering around a barren moon. *Cameron Macdonald*

BMORE GUTTER MUSIC

Milkcrate/US/CD
Diplo shone a spotlight on underground Brazilian booty bass with his *Favela on Blast* mix CD—now Milkcrate Athletics founder Aaron Lacrate and Diplo's Hollertronix homeboy Low Budget are poised to do the same thing for Baltimore club music. Their *Bmore Gutter Music* mix slaps together Charm City anthems like Rod Lee's "Dance My Pain Away" and "Puttin' It Down" and Blaqstarr's "Get My Gun" with special edits and exclusives from Spank Rock and pot-tymouthed cohort Amanda Blank, the self-proclaimed "Kelly Bundy

of rap" who boasts a Twista-fast flow. Though LaCrate's in New York and Budget's in Philly, they've wisely enlisted Baltimore scene godfather Scottie B (Unruly Records) to executive produce the whole damn thing. The resulting mix has a ghetto crunk party-meets-Downtown New York feel; it's a gully party rocker with enough dirty lyrics, crazy stabs and chipmunked melodies to please even the most stubborn asses and shortest attention spans. *Tyra Bangs*

COMPOST 200: FRESHLY COMPOSTED ISAR GOLD: NUGGETS FROM MUNICH'S VITAL ARTIST, LABEL & CLUB SCENE

Compost/GER/CD
Most labels are happy if they put out good releases in one style, maybe two. These compilations highlight not only how good Compost releases can sound, but the breadth they cover, too. Including recent and future releases, *Compost 200* includes everything from the chilled beauty of Beanfield's "Close to You" to Ben Mono's bass-and-funk "Protection" to Eddy Meets Yannah's broken beat "Shamed" to Product.01's Blondie-esque "Heart Ov Glass." There's some overlap on *Isar Gold*, which draws more on sleazy/sexy disco-techno music from Munich, like Leroy Hanghofer's fat-bassed "Bathroomboogie." *Compost 200* feels broader, but it's hard to go wrong with either. *Luciana Lopez*

CUTE AND CULT: MIXED BY AGORIA

Different-Play It Again Sam/BEL/CD
Attempting to create a singular, slightly cartoonish environment, Sebastien Devaud has previously said his Agoria alter ego exists in "a world without right angles, where forms and atmospheres aren't rigid." For his first mix album, however, Devaud introduces right angles via a door turned 90 degrees and used as a table for a trio of decks, a mixer and a loop machine. Devaud feeds tracks by the likes of Angelo Badalamenti, Carl Craig, Swayzak and Radiohead into his machines, forging a mix that is busy, distinct and full of character. Still, the inclusion of Iggy Pop's "Nightclubbing" seems a disruptive misstep, however droll it might be. *David Hemingway*

FABRIC 25: CARL CRAIG

Fabric/UK/CD
You're probably expecting loads of poker-faced, future-tilting, Detroit techno from Mr. Craig, right? Guess again. Planet E's honcho subverts expectations with this 18-track mix that mainly explores house's deeper terrain while keeping the party vibes at fever pitch (aided by Craig's own synth embellishments, handclaps and crowd-hyping exhortations). After layering lush synth washes over Ying Yang Twins' nasty acapella of "Wait," Craig segues into pacific, Basic Channel-like techno with his "Angel (Caya Dub)," But soon after, he's off on a soulful, cowbell-heavy house bender before returning to more familiar orchestral tech-house. Craig's dug deep for Fabric 25, and it pays hedonistic dividends. *Dave Segal*

FLO-MOTION VOLUME 2

Kudos/UK/CD
Need more proof about the sorry state of commercial radio in the States? Spin *Flo-Motion Volume 2*, the second mix of representative tracks from DJ Nick Luscombe's satellite XFM radio program. Luscombe's line-up specializes in downtempo, but don't expect an hour of limp *n-th* generation trip-hop dregs here: he opens with Jonny Trunk's gorgeous, filmic "Zeus," eases us into HKB Finn's unhurried rap "Confession (I Am)," and later transitions from the deep tech-dub of One Deck And Popular's "Inner Space" to Nathan Fake's epic bleep house number "Dinamo." Perhaps we can get radio this good over that newfangled internet! *Rob Geary*

FUNCKARMA: REFURBISHED ONE

n5MD/US/CD
On *Refurbished One*, brothers Don and Roel Funcken remix artists who saw God in the likes of Autechre and Plaid, poking their music just to see embers and smoke pop out. They typically set a midtempo rhythm to strut while they scramble it and let hazes of synth melodies float above. Their formula works on the neon rainfall of Blamstrain's "Alive in Arms" and Speedy J's "Hayfever," but it eventually grows redundant, with all the tracks sounding like they were conceived by the same artist. Many remixers desire this effect; in this case, Funckarma has robbed most of these 14 names of their personalities. *Cameron Macdonald*

GOLDIE PRESENTS METALHEADZ MDZ 05 METALHEADZ PRESENTS THE WINTER OF CONTENT

Meatheadz/UK/CD
Metalheadz has always been the litmus test of the D&B scene. *MDZ 05* fulfills that legacy, arching from Klute's complex beats up to the 2-step posturing of Danny C's

"Star [Stepper Remix]" to a clutch of synth rollers from Commix and newcomer Drifter. Meanwhile, *Winter of Content* is busy reviving the rave revival movement of '00, again revisiting "Mentasm" synths and vamping keyboards. Controlled dark dub weirdness comes through in standout tracks from choppage folks like Break and Senses, but it's Digital (the only artist from *Platinum Breakz* featured here) who takes the crown with the superb melodic bounce of "Scam." *Matt Earp*

JAZZ TOYS 2

Perfect Toy/GER/CD
Between issuing his label's steady output of quality EPs, artist albums and compilations, Marcus Hacker has found time to compile the second edition of the *Jazz Toys* series, which (like JCR's *Formation 60* comp) focuses entirely on rare and funky '70s German jazz. Hacker lovingly compiles a stellar batch from his rare collection of 45s including the beautifully composed "The Pawn" by the Heikki Sarmento Big Band to smoking covers such as Wendy & the Nolan Ranger Orchestra's version of "Fever." *Jazz Toys 2* is another peak into the fascinating mojo of post-war German jazz-funk. *Velanche*

JAZZANOVA: THE REMIXES 2002-2005

Sonar Kollektiv/GER/CD
Gotta feel for these boys from Berlin, whose first collection of remixes saw such success; now everyone's gonna wonder, "How does this compare?" For better and worse, it's *not* more of the same. While the über-fat broken beats and super-moody strings on Masters At Work's "Our Time Is Coming" certainly recall pre-2002 work, on the whole J-nova breaks new ground with crunchier, more futuristic sounds—among them, the crispy ride of Marcos Valle's "Besteiras Do Amor" and the squelchy sci-fi Western flavor of Calexico's "Black Heart." Dig the new breed. *Peter Nicholson*

LOUNGE GROOVES: THE SOPHISTICATED SOUNDTRACK OF NIGHTLIFE

Koch/US/CD
Your mama always told you not to judge a book by its cover, right? Despite its title and corny pop-lounge cover art, *Lounge Grooves*'s two discs are filled with two solid mixes that run the gamut of both East and West Coast house, all culled from the vast catalog of America's premier house distribution company, Syntax Records. JT Donaldson's disc adds acid, dub and jazz flavors to a relentless jacking groove, while DJ Joeski's mix brims with upbeat Latin house flair and more soulful vocal tracks. So don't be fooled, fool! *Rob Geary*

NOCHES DE HIP-HOP

Immergent/US/CD
With reggaeton and Latin music getting ubiquitous, the appearance of quickie compilations with churned-out tracks is inevitable. Happily, this is not one of those. Instead, *Noches*, including new and established Latin hip-hop artists, features polished and consistent numbers. Malverde's blazing "Oye Mami" and Cultura Londres' downtempo-leaning "Good Times" both stand out for mixing Spanish lyrics over beats that expertly blend Latin and Anglo influences. On the slowed-down "Sigo," Crooked Stilo even uses the Colombian folk rhythm *cumbia*—impressive, considering the bouncy *cumbia* doesn't exactly scream street. The album brings plenty of such rewards. *Luciana Lopez*

PRINCE PAUL: HIP-HOP GOLD DUST

Antidote/UK/CD
As producer extraordinaire Prince Paul inches closer to officially hanging up his MPC, it's only right that his latest release takes a moment to reflect upon his oft-underappreciated career in hip-hop. In doing so, Paul unearths several rare gems from the vaults that are guaranteed to get heads nodding. It's dumbfounding to think of how tracks like Justin Warfield's slick 1991 single "K Sera Sera" were so slept on or how numbers like LA Symphony's hilarious hard-luck anthem "Broken Now" never got released at all. Thanks to Paul and the good folks at Antidote, some of the best hip-hop records you've never heard are now being given a second chance. *Max Herman*

RICHEL HAWTIN: DE9-TRANSITIONS

Novamute/US/CD
Following up 2001's standard-setting microedit showcase *Closer to the Edit*, Berlin-based and Canadian-bred techno producer Richie Hawtin's latest is an immersive affair where breath is paid as much attention to as breadth. Using Ableton Live and ProTools Hawtin cobbles isolated gradients of up to six simultaneous tracks by Ricardo Villalobos, Stewart Walker, Carl Craig, Baby Ford, Underground Resistance, Plastikman, Detroit Grand Pubahs, Luciano, Mathew Dear, Daniel Bell and False among countless others. The gently jacking CD is as hypnotic as it is diaphanous yet holds nothing to the 96-minute DVD, voluminous in 5.1 and providing a visual illustration of the source's stitching. *Transitions* is essential technology. *Tony Ware*

THE RAID: A TRIP INTO THE VAULT OF FORT KNOX RECORDINGS AND JALAPEÑO RECORDS

Jalapeño/US/CD
In the case of these two compilations of funky breaks, the vault is probably a hard drive, since the featured producers aren't funk-era artifacts. But even though the artists here are recording today, current trends don't figure prominently. From the carnival-organ cut "Rastarollarink" to the psychedelic raga remix of "Man of Constant Sorrows" to the Norman Cook-channeling "Nitty Gritty," the theme is fun, catchy—and sometimes cheesy—beats. A diva gets fresh on "Now I'm Livin' for Me," but that's about as serious as it gets. The good times may get old, but *The Raid* remains more entertaining than many albums that try to be serious and fail. *Patrick Sisson*

SMALL MELODIES

Spekk/JPN/CD
Keen observers will hear the subtleties that differentiate these 14 "small melodies" compiled by Spekk's Nao Sugimoto, who also handles each release's high-concept graphic design (the white book *Melodies* comes in is adorned with silver foil flowers). Listening passively, the tracks blend together in a sonorous wave, anchored by a hum that pervades the album. Aen's "Film" seems to eavesdrop on a lonesome party guest, running his finger slowly around a wineglass rim, while Anderegg's "Inside/Outside" is sediment flowing through a glinting brook—the rest of the tracks could be described as 4 a.m. in sonic form. Surprises await you, if you can stay awake. *Rachel Shimp*

STUDIO ONE: ROOTS 2

Soul Jazz/UK/CD
Nothing stops unearthed material from Studio One—the "University of Reggae" (as Chris Blackwell dubbed it)—from appearing. This second edition features seven unreleased tracks from Sir Coxsone Dodd's vaults. Winston Matthews sounds eerily like Robert Nesta on "Sun is Shining," his melodica tinny and beatifically Rasta. Classics from Cedric "Im" Brooks, Joe Higgs, Ken Boothe and Count Ossie make this yet another credible addition to the vast catalog of Jamaican folk. The analog sound of classic reggae is unmatched by our digital excursions—these 19 selections are as raw as it comes. *Derek Beres*



THE ELECTRIC INSTITUTE

A.R.T.—New Religion/UK/CD
While his last albums explored a more organic approach to electronic soul music, Kirk Degiorgio returns to his techno roots by resurrecting his long-dormant Applied Rhythmic Technology label, beginning with this exquisite compilation. Detroit is in full effect, as Carl Craig (operating as 69), Stacey Pullen and Anthony "Shake" Shakir gift exclusive jams. Craig's "Puntang" wins out—it's a signature builder with underlying breakbeats that melds his past and present in a blistering sound-clash. It's not all 4/4 business, though. Broken beats get a look in via Domu's whiplash-inducing "Quarantine" and Pullen's sick synth roller "Liquid Letter" carries the torch for future jazz. Add in tracks from Plaid alter ego Balil and Degiorgio himself (one a collaboration with Ian O'Brien) and you've got the welcome return of a mindset thought lost. Don't sleep this time. *Mike Battaglia*



TECHNO GUEST REVIEWS: NOAH PRED

Next to Germany, Canada has the world's most vibrant young techno community. Its celebrity producers (Richie Hawtin, Mathew Jonson, Akufen) are now known far and wide, but a crop of the country's lesser-hyped beatmakers have also been incredibly prolific over the past few years. Count among them Noah Pred, the Toronto-based DJ and live artist whose swelling catalog of releases for Metapath, Consigned and Saboteur number more than two dozen. Pred's textured sound—built on a groundwork of warm, vibrant synths, alien percussion and carefully manipulated effects—recalls Luomo's lush tech house, Sutekh's eerie minimalism and Cari Lekebusch's prominent, layered rhythms. Currently Pred runs both the Metapath and Sentient Sound labels and he's recently performed at the New Forms (Vancouver) and Decibel (Seattle) festivals. With projects including separate downtempo and hip-hop/electro albums in the works, we asked Mr. Pred to give us the lowdown on his hottest wax. *Hector Cedillo*
www.noahpred.com, www.metapathrecordings.com

CODEBASE DATA AGENT Intrinsic Design/US/12

San Diego's Codebase turns in a gorgeous slice of late-night groove for the ever-solid Intrinsic Design imprint. Do you like rich analog bass sprinkled with delicate melodic bleeps? Is tight programming a plus? Then this one is for you. *Noah Pred*

GENARRO ROSSI PHONO PUNK Mutekki/GER/12

Delectable recipe for dancefloor mania: one part electro, two parts acid house, add a dash of fresh techno, garnish with trance and serve between 1-3 a.m. "Phono Pun" is a lesson in dynamic hypnotism, seamlessly raising the energy of a room without anyone noticing until they've got their hands in the air. This one's in the crate for a while to come. *Noah Pred*

APOLL FROM A TO B (FALKO BROCKSIEPER REMIX) Tongut/SWT/12

Substac's minimal master takes on Switzerland's Apoll in a fierce battle of wobbling synthetic bass, agile edits and hallucinatory electronic refrains. A multiplicity of textures weave their way through the mix, resulting in a claustrophobic tech house voyage sure to keep everyone onboard. *Noah Pred*

JAMIE ANDERSON

SHORT STORIES

Fixia/UK/12

So what does Jamie Anderson tell us with these four short stories? "Food For Thought" is a tale of A.R.T. label-style broken electronic synthesis. "More Or Less" delves into the lives of minimalist old-school techno souls. "Back Then" is a yarn reminiscing on late '80s robotic beats and the book finishes with the potent "Open Your Mind"—a willful Jack-The-Tab acid revival. Talk about pulp friction! *Derek Grey*

PELLARIN

OIL ON ALUMINUM #1: TANGO EP

Statler & Waldorf/GER/12

Danish producer Lars Pellarin's music is the aural equivalent of watching an abstract minimalist paint, methodically applying alternate strokes of aquamarine and purple-grey brushstrokes until a blank white canvas is shaded with amorphous colors. His intentionally obscured rhythms aren't the focus of these five tracks; rather, light-particle noise fragments and the hiss of long-decayed echoes create a slowly emerging fusion of sounds. A subtle, evocative presentation. *Tomas Palermo*

TRIOLA

IM DUBRAUM TEIL 2

Kompakt/GER/12

A quartet of interpretations of tracks from Triola's *Im Fuentonraum* suggests that Jörg Burger concurs with Michael Mayer's belief that minimal music needs to be "compared" with other sounds to remain interesting. Bus' remix of "Neuland" seems to match Triola's semi-ambient minimalism with nothing so much as (slow-motion) '80s funk. Dettinger, (Burger's alter-ego) The Modernist and Mikkel Metal also contribute likable re-versions. *David Hemingway*

SUBURBAN KNIGHT

DIGITAL WARRIOR EPISODE 2

COLLECTOR 82

Dark Print/GER/12

Without hesitation, this Detroit underground swordsman drops a vial of acid between the electro-tainted speakers. Delivering a trip laced with '90s analog techno flair, you can expect loopy Roland synths to drive the floor into a frenzy. Sublime yet moody, this EP encompasses a bit of atmosphere and a heap of mystery. Flip for a shuffled electro twist with a bouncy, butt bumpin' bosca-style beat. *Praxis*

MARC MIROIR & TOM KLEIN

CANNOT FLY

Paso/GER/12

With Italo-disco and electro-tech at an all-time high, this subliminal funk thriller offers a slightly headier vibe. Fusing tribal tech house, a melodic minimal bass hook and sultry straight-eighth hats, its edgy themes will complement demanding, restless crowds. Using several distinctly dissonant synths in the lead, harmonic overload is not too far off. Heavily on rotation from DJ Hell and alike, only purely erotic players need apply here. *Praxis*

NOW 03

Underscan/GER/12

This five-artist compendium—available on vinyl, CD or MP3 download—sees the likes of Menu:Exit, Frank Bretschneider and others exploring techno's experimental possibilities with as many mutations and intentional errors as possible. New artist Bogger's (Berlin's Oliver Kiesow) electro drums bite like shark teeth, while Everest plumbs Ghostly Records' new-school handclap IDM. M:E provides another highlight with his Deadbeat-ish dub-style polyrhythmic freakout. *Tomas Palermo*

CHRONOBIUS

TS

Fine Audio/GER/12

It takes a serious sweat-recycling, smoke-laden afterhours club to appre-

ciate the likes of this cut. As grinding metallic pads drone an industrial haze, relentless distorted loops of meticulously twiddled drums pummel all those healthy enough to stand. An epic break of psychedelic proportions kicks things into overdrive, while a subtle melody attracts shaking fannies. *Praxis*

FORCE STACCATO

FORCE STACCATO EP

Sonic Groove/US/12

Originally released in 1990, this classic Oliver Lieb/EBM-inspired minimal techno installation has not been available for 14 years. Complementing the title cut, Detroit's Ectomorph and label chief Adam X submit their own electro- and industrial-fused remixes. Prepare to relive the catacombs of Dorian Grey in Frankfurt, and remember there is no future without the past. *Praxis*

SCSI-9

ON THE EDGE

Kompakt/GER/12

One-time metal and oil trader Maxim Milyutenko was apparently seduced by music-making after a business trip to Cologne alerted him to the joys of techno—it seems only fitting that he and Anton Kubikov continue to release such exquisite music via Kompakt. The slightly melancholic title track of their latest EP sounds so graceful and perfectly poised that it could happily be renamed "On The Money," on "Senorita Tristeza," meanwhile, Milyutenko and Kubikov curiously evoke the joys of España from their Russian bunker. *David Hemingway*



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MARCELO D2 LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT BEAT



Marcelo D2 is the leader and vocalist from rap-rock band **Planet Hemp** that have sold over 900,000 copies in Brazil. This is the long awaited second solo album from MD2 that perfectly fuses samba and hip hop. MD2 also boasts one of the best live shows on earth!

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NOVALIMA AFRO



These guys have taken Afro-Peruvian rhythms and added a **Gotan Project** feel with tons of dub thrown into it like **N.O.W's Smokers Delight**. All the killer musicians from 60s / 70's period feature and the album is full of traditional percussion, jaw bones wooden boxes and the like

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HOUSE GUEST REVIEWS: MARC ROMBOY

House DJs have been spoiled the past two years as international labels like Rong, Get Physical, Coco Machete, Modal, Kitsune and Grayhound have issued single after single of electroboogie perfection. And just when we thought German imprints couldn't offer us any more disco magic, up pops Marc Romboy and Systematic. Hailing from that tourist Mecca-Mönchengladbach, Germany-Romboy's '04-founded Systematic imprint has seen this Chicago-influenced producer release solo tracks and work alongside producers Booka Shade (Get Physical), Blake Baxter (Detroit) and Stephan Bodzin, each one with sizzling analog synth bass, cowbells and robotic vintage drum programming held together with tight engineering. In addition to signing singles for Systematic by Martin Landsky, Phonique and Olaf Poszgay, Romboy's label just issued the new album by John Dahlbäck (*Man From The Fall*). With his album debut set for March '06, Romboy unveiled his current favorite singles. *Tomas Palermo*
www.systematic-recordings.com, www.marcromboy.com

STEVE BUG THE SMACKMAN EP Pokerflat/GER/12

Lots of Pokerflat records are in my record case as I'm a big fan of Martin Lindsey's tunes. This time label boss Steve Bug has produced a cool and grooving two-tracker that underlines the high quality of the deep house label. "Mad Ass" and "Smack" will rule the dancefloors. *Marc Romboy*

DJ FEX BEAUTIFUL Systematic/GER/12

Fex has made the January release on my Systematic imprint and I'm very proud of this record, as there are not so many of this kind on the market. "Beautiful" is a pretty, electro-esque groover with a nice female laugh sample that modulates so much that you can't recognize it anymore. For me, Fex is one of the up-and-coming producers of 2006. *Marc Romboy*

HERBERT BOESE CHARGER Jaktronik/GER/12

Herbert Boese is the man behind the Jaktronik imprint and resident jock of the legendary Harpune Club in Dusseldorf. The fact that he's a good friend of mine is not why I chose this record. This track is simply massive. "Charger" is a mixture of *phat* bass and Detroit-ish strings that makes people scream. *Marc Romboy*

GRAND TORINO 76

THE FUNK

Grab/US/12

Brazilian carnival vibes rule the ultra-percussive and sexually provocative "Kinky Girl," a track that should see some clothing fly off on the dancefloor. Exactly what I would expect from a pair of French house producers (Mr. Fuzz and Julien Leroux). But the key tune here is "Soulmachine," where funky guitars and scat-jazz vocals dip in out of sweet Rhodes keys and spacey breakdowns. A summer single to warm up winter. *Barry Gee*

MIDAS

THE LAST DANCE EP

Uma/US/12

This is rumored to be the final release from the guys that make up the Midas crew, and it appears they will be leaving the game on top. Standout tracks on this strong release are "Carob Undies," "Bitin' Acid" and "Matrix," which also includes a production from Brett Johnson. *ML Tronik*

BAEKA

MORE TROUBLE

TOM ELLIS

KARMA

Morris Audio/GER/12

"More Trouble" has the foundation sound of classic artists like 95 North and Lil' Louis, produced not on a dusty reel-to-reel but with Ableton Live. This diminishes the warmth of Baeka's soulful house only slightly and allows Jussi-Pekka's icy, techier remix arrange-

ment to compliment the affair nicely. Tom Ellis strips his echo-laden minimal house to the bone, adding only snippets of dialog, keyboard shards and deeply buried basslines that flow like magma. Ellis' tracks got me baked. *Derek Grey*

T. FULLER

GO

SEAN DIMITRIE & T. FULLER

SLIP BY

Bombay/CAN/12

Two singles that highlight the excellent production talents of Canada's Sean Dimitre and distinctive singer Tim Fuller. Dimitre makes simple and effective bubbling beats built with jazz bass pluckings, delays and effects galore and a glorious rhythmic shuffle. Fuller is house music's most understated vocalist, invoking equal parts Amp Fiddler and Curtis Mayfield—a memorable combo that stays looping in your mind long after "Go" and "Slip On By" have faded out. *Hector Cedillo*

NICK CHACONA & ANTHONY MANSFIELD OH SNAP

Hector Works/US/12

The first joint on San Francisco sleaze-lord Anthony "Garlic" Mansfield's new bi-coastal label sets the standard for West Coast dirty house labels even higher, as he commissions a couple of the hardest-hitting remixers of the moment to ill it up a few notches. If you're looking for the full-on "oh fuck, I think the second one just hit me" experience, then the original and Freestyle Man edit will do you properly. Two more dope remixes by Stranger and Steffy make this buy-on-sight material. *TK*



DRUM & BASS GUEST REVIEWS: KASRA

As drum & bass labels come and go, Kasra Mowlavi's keen ear for talent and dedication to quality rather than a particular style has seen his Critical record label rise to prominence. Imbued with a passion for discovering new music and an eagerness to get more involved with the scene, Kasra launched his Critical imprint in 2001. Since then, the label has filled its catalog with gems from the new breed (including Breakage and Young Ax) and firmly established veterans like Calibre and Total Science (as Funky Technicians) alike. With his recent production debut—the soulful dubness of "Babylon" with Austria's D.Kay—Kasra is soaring on track. The man took a break from his busy release schedule and high-profile gigs to share some recent heaters burning up his crate. *Ryan Romana*
www.criticalmusic.com

CYANTIFIC SNOWFLAKE Hospital/UK/12

Slowly but surely the Cyantific boys have been making the right waves, showcasing their diversity and production skills off to full effect. In a way this track is one of their more simplistic efforts, yet still with their trademark sampling acrobatics. A bassline roller reminiscent of the halcyon days in Bristol. *Kasra*

SILENT WITNESS TRIPLE SEED DNAudio/UK/12

Remember the days of the stepper? Well if you do and you miss them, or if you don't and would like to know what the giddy biscuit I'm talking about is, then check this tune out. It's got a bit of tech with a chunk of funk, then the second drop comes in with some expertly sliced drum action. This tune makes me want to love and hate all at the same time. *Kasra*

LOGISTICS Shooting Star Hospital/UK/12

Does the Hospital label need my relentless big-ups? Probably not, but when drum & bass is this good, who cares? It's good-time music for a world full of lethal viruses and terrorism. I wonder if Loggy sits in a room full of faeries eating cakes? If I could give this 11 out of 10 I would. 11/10. There, I did it. *Kasra*

CRYSTAL CLEAR & CODEBREAKER FEAT. DAVE BOOMAH

2 TONE SOUND

Ganja/UK/12

MC Boomah's lyrics invoke the 1980s Jamaican/English music style (2-Tone)—but rather than a ska-sampling number, this is a standard D&B roller with a combo of R&B-sung vocals and DJ toasting. Its circus organs (à la The Specials) mix well with the penetrating chopped beats. Meanwhile, b-side "The Sickness" is missing that *something* which would qualify it for more than a warm-up spin. *Derek Grey*

EZ ROLLERS

CAISTER

LICKABLE BEATS REMIXES

Intercom/UK/12

Each side of Intercom single 039 compliments the other like chocolate digestives and a strong cup of Earl Grey tea (sans milk). While "Caister" revisits the EZ's soulful territory, sampling some rare funk horns and vocal bits, the flip ("Mr. Fingers") is built with futuristic staccato rhythms and dirty synth bass stabs. The Rollers' "Bellagio" mix from *Lickable Beats 2* best invokes the duo's sound: rude bass and hard drums with musical flourishes that add luster. *Tomas Palermo*

MURDERBOT

ONLYWORLD

Dead Homies/US/12

Murderbot draws a loaded weapon and fires two exceptional soundclash sample-saturated ragga jungle hollowpoints. My ears gravitate toward the high-grade

"Purple Skunk," which slices up Ricky Trooper's Louie Culture "Bogus Badge" dubplate before offering Tony Matterhorn's counter action. Mad! The rest of the single is jammed with funky diced drums and surprising soul nuggets. *Tomas Palermo*

A GUY CALLED GERALD

IS MAN IN DANGER

Protechshon/UK/12

Gerald is back, reclaiming his Jamaican culture via his '90s jungle roots. And this amen-fueled track *does* take you back, to an era when raw tunes were gushing out of Bristol and London like a just-tapped oil geyser. While not the breakthrough track that "Energy" was in '95, "Is Man In Danger" makes a clear statement via multi-timbral percussion, sizzling bass throbs and a repeated patois vocal. Welcome back to The Don Drumma. *DJ Chopper*

ANCHRONIX/EYE-D/KID ENTROPY/DJ HIDDEN

640K EP

Soothsayer/US/12

This Atlanta label's fourth release will please fans of Violence, Freak and Barcode. Pulling no punches, the dark synths and pitched snares ooze out like a sinister blob enveloping an unsuspecting metropolis, dissolving flesh and bone on contact. Hard, evil darkstep business. *DJ Chopper*

SPEAKER JUNKIES

TEKNO PUNK

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BREAKS GUEST REVIEWS: GENERAL MIDI

Oh that wacky Paul Crossman and his bugged out housey breaks recordings as General Midi. He's been on a naughty tear of late. Sure, his production name is a sly reference to a standardized hardware/software computer communication language, but his music is not merely for know-it-all geeks; instead, it's rather populist. Situated smack-dab in the middle of the UK's breakbeat underground alongside pals like Thursday Club's Rennie Pilgrim and Kilowatt's DJ Hyper, Crossman wasn't satisfied to just release signature tracks like "Daft Funk" (TCR). No, he had to go and make a mad album for Distinctive (home to the Y2K comp series). Slap on the just-released *Midi Style* and you'll immediately notice that, far from standard sub-bass wobbling nu-skool breaks, Crossman has thoroughly infused the release with electro-funk, acid house and funky '80s dance tracks à la Egyptian Lover. Meanwhile, songs like "Turn It Around" stir dub, broken beat and UK mic toasting into the mix. Boh! So now it's Midi time—time to find out this inventive breaks dude's favorite new singles. *Derek Grey*
www.distinctiverecords.com

METRIC & ROGERS THIS IS HIP-HOP Burrito/UK/12

The latest release from Koma & Bones' imprint ups the ante with a peak-time groover of massive proportions. A vocoded vocal sits on a solid track with a b-line that just gets under your skin, takes control of your limbs and hurls you to the dancefloor. Oh yeah, and have I mentioned the breakdown? *General Midi*

HYPER WE CONTROL Kilowatt/UK/12

Taken from the forthcoming album, "We Control" is an explosive mash-up of beats, bass, synth-like guitars and an all-consuming punk attitude. On the flip, Future Funk Squad techs it up and darkens it out with his signature sound. This rocks. *General Midi*

DOPAMINE HARSH Titlefight/AUS/12

Dopamine has been one to watch over the last year (his last release on TCR being a prime example). Claiming that "Hip-hop is folk music," the track powers along but keeps the funk intact. On the b-side, Dopamine hooks up with label honcho Klaus 'Heavyweight' Hill for a tougher heads-down affair. Highly recommended. *General Midi*

D.M. PROJECT HABIBI REMIX

Man/GER/12

Ridiculously infectious, this 12-inch is stunningly simple. It's a rework of Bam's "Planet Rock" mashed together with some music from *Aladdin*. Rio's DJ Marlboro made it and it's so weird and undeniably catchy that you'll be hearing this at hipster juke joints for years to come. Berlin's Man Recordings is on a roll. *Matt Earp*

DANNY MCMILLAN ANDROID PARTY

In-Flight/UK/12

Always digging deeper into the production bag than the rest of the pack, McMillan crafts "Android Party" to be all things to all breakers: funky, forceful, lush and driving. With dramatic peaks and drops, thick sheets of warm synthesizer mist, rumbling, insistent bass riffage and panned effects galore, McMillan pulls out all the stops. *Koma and Bones offer a sparser, harder rework*, but it's Danny Mac who rules the release. *Tomas Palermo*

X:144 AND SPS LAST VOICE

Nonsense/US/12

Two heavy hits that manage to speak positive and call out injustice without being preachy, talking up MLK and Ghandi while creating one hell of a hype party. X:144's cuts blaze while SPS gives 110%, with a real urgency in his delivery. The whole thing is drenched in Florida keyboards but never comes across soft. Expect big things. *Matt Earp*

LOEF AH & SKREAM 286

Tectonic/UK/12

Lurking through the shadows Jack The Ripper-style, "286" was a high-light of Tempa's recent *Dubstep Allstars 2* comp—it's a track that'll rattle your subwoofers for all their money's worth. On this single—which is as desolate and granular as the Sahara—Loefah and Skream use precision percussion and reverb-soaked alien synth sounds for a truly blackhearted slice of dubstep. *DJ Chopper*

ED209 VS. DAPPER DAN TING DEM

Hardcore Beats/UK/12

It's another wild ride from Hardcore Beats—but I've got news for all the label's nu-skool breakbeat fans: this is a rave record. That's right—think Prodigy, Utah Saints and Acen; mad hip-hop samples buried in dramatic stabs, tweaked synths and radioactive basslines. This ain't head-bobbing, get-funky and sip-a-lager gear; rather, it's get-off-your-head-on-a-dozen-pills-and-trip-the-fuck-out-bathed-in-green-lasers music. You've been warned. *DJ Chopper*

TRIM & SCRATCH TRIM & SCRATCH

Related/UK/12

This MC duo bellows ferociously "You've heard us before and you know that it's raw"—and I haven't, but they are...raw that is. So raw that some of their made-on-the-spot verses nearly miss the target, but their hooky, back-and-forth lyric interplay draws you back in. The grimy instrumental version is in Black Ops/Wiley territory, punchy and gangsta-limping through the estates with razor-sharp snares and Tazer synth noises. Stay tuned to this pair for future badness. *DJ Chopper*

TEX

WHAT COMES NATURALLY

white/UK/12

This mysteriously-labeled 4/4 garage romp gets extra points for the track "Worries In The Dance," an ode to all soundsystem and Frankie Paul fans. The tune bubbles with garage's traditional rhythmic upswing, tinkling organs and a splattering of roughneck samples. The other two tracks are more polished DC/New York-influenced vocal house/UK garage hybrids with gospelly choruses made secular via dirty basslines. *Tomas Palermo*

MAN LIKE ME OH MY GOSH

Non-Stop/UK/12

Now this is some UK shit. It's Fun Boy Three-meets-Dizee Rascal. It's Malcolm McLaren producing Mike Skinner with Bloc Party as the backing musicians, or an art-funk band that wants to be glam-house. I don't care what it is, we just need more groups like this to open doors and let some fresh air in. *Derek Grey*

DEEKLINE & WIZARD ALL YOUR LOVE

Bochit & Scarper/UK/12

D&W's mix of freestyle, hi-NRG and nu-skool breaks will have all but devoted Stacie Q fans balking—it's more evidence that most veteran breakbeat producers are more comfortable these days making cheesy "big room" club tracks. Even IIs' traditional electro mix is more cookie-cutter batter than a baked-from-scratch Toll House goodie. *Derek Grey*



HIP-HOP GUEST REVIEWS: HOUSTON SO REAL

Slower than you could utter “sippin’ on some sizzurp,” Houston rap acts like Slim Thug, Mike Jones, Bun B and Paul Wall became nationally known...only to be upstaged later in ‘05 by a storm called Rita. Through all the bluster there’s been Houston So Real and Damage Control Radio, a blog and radio broadcast administered by Matt Sonzala, a freelance music writer and DJ based in Houston, Texas. Sonzala is your go-to guy for all things H-Town and people have been *going* to him—from worldwide fans of his blog to Brit MCs like Dizzee Rascal and Kano who’ve appeared on his radio show. His role as ambassador of trill goes back to his teens (he booked his first concert at age 15), and he is currently rap booker for Austin’s South By Southwest music festival. So whether it’s Swishahouse or Geto Boys you need the real facts on, Sonzala got ya stash, patna’. Dawg recommends the following new *sangles*. *Opie Davis* <http://houstonsoreal.blogspot.com>

TRAE FEATURING FAT PAT AND HAWK SWANG Gmaab Ent/US/12

Done as an homage to the late, great Fat Pat, “Swang” represents Houston car culture like no song since ESG’s classic “Swang & Bang.” Pat’s brother Hawk contributes a verse and trades barbs with Screwed Up Click alumnus Trae in between Fat Pat’s classic line from the Houston hit “25 Lighters.” *Matt Sonzala*

KENIKA DRAG ‘EM OUT THE CLUB 20 Below/US/12

Possibly the hottest female voice to emerge from the South since Trina, Kenika walks the line between reality rap and club jams like no one before her. On this single, known in the streets as “Drag A Bit Out The Club,” Kenika takes no shortcuts as she cleans house on haters and fools trying to get in her mix. The beat by Jokaman is laidback and aggressive at the same time, almost sinister. *Matt Sonzala*

K-RINO NO LOVE Black Book International/US/CD

A blunt look at the other side of Houston 2005, this single hits hard and leaves only the best standing. K-Rino is like the old sage of Houston rap and he’s seen everything from day one. With all the articles professing how hot the city is now due to the success of the Swishahouse, K-Rino reminds the listener of all the folks who paved the way. *Matt Sonzala*

DAVE GHETTO HEY YOUNG WORLD PART 2 Counterflow/US/12

“*Life-it ain’t worth a dime/To try and make it better ain’t worth my time*” laments Dave Ghetto about the mindstate of youngsters nowadays on this breakout single, where the Jersey MC sounds like Mos Def rhyming on a classic Tribe Called Quest beat. In fact, it’s Phonte of Little Brother behind the boards, and Oakland’s Mystic drops a guest verse. Producer Ill Mind hooks up a faster beat for “Spread The Light” as Ghetto emerges to lead this conscious party. *Big Dee*

ONE SELF BE YOUR OWN Ninja Tune/UK/2x12

DJ Vadim’s left his creaking doors for warmer pastures, taking collaborators Yarah Bravo and Blu Rum 13 with him. The beats are still pastiche but now there’s undeniable sex appeal, synths soaring over funky clavinetts. Amp Fiddler turns the get-it-on knob up to 11 with two remixes, then flips it back to Vadim who provides a real dub workout. The best singles from the album. *Matt Earp*

STRONG ARM STEADY GET CHA BARS UP Nature Sounds/US/12

Damnit, why do I have to travel to LA to hear ill underground street funk that’s hype enough for radio spins? Case in point: this joint featuring *veteranos* Xzibit, Phil The Agony, Krondon and Mitchy Slick. The rest of the US is nappin’ on the West again. Krondon calls this track a “jailhouse jingle.” True, its G’d up, but the hook grabs

you like the best Jay-Z, Snoop, Cube or Nate Dogg track. Don’t miss this W-side anthem. *Hector Cedillo*

GIANT PANDA TKO Tres/US/12

“T.K.O.” is the kind of uptempo, funk-sampling and old-school-minded hip-hop record you could see DJs like Cut Chemist, Peanut Butter Wolf or Bobbito rocking doubles of. Ohmega Watts fattens up the groove on the Mega Mix, while the Pandas rhyme rhythmically in multiple languages. The cover art of a panda bear in boxing gloves sums up the powerful results of this party banger. *Tomas Palermo*

TROUBLED SOUL GHOST WRITER SERIES 1 EP All City/IRE/12

A collaboration between Belfast’s Troubled Soul and Seattle’s B Boy Genre has been threatening for some time now. So long that B Boy Genre has since split, with some members forming the shit-hot Giant Panda crew. As always, TS’s trademark beats are streets ahead of his contemporaries, while the upbeat boom-bap of MCs Chikaramanga, Newmann, Maanumental and Wose displays a versatility and lyrical depth that is quite breathtaking. *Gerald ‘GIK’ Kelleher*



FUTURE JAZZ GUEST REVIEWS: DJ ARGO

Internet radio was but bland bandwidth until Broke N’ Beat Radio began broadcasting three years ago, bringing to the streaming airwaves DJ sets by the international future jazz cognoscenti alongside local stalwarts from the station’s Philly backyard. Argo is an essential component of the City of Brotherly Love, having held residencies since 1997 at key clubs and parties including Silk City, Club 1415 and underground events like Mud People. In addition to spinning across the East Coast and organizing festivals in his hometown, Argo has opened for touring bands such as Galactic, in addition to starting his broadcasting career with guest spots at WKDU (Philly) and WPRB (Princeton, NJ). It all lead to Broke N’ Beat Radio, which boasts a global following with listeners from Turkey, Hungary, Belgium and Berlin. Argo’s BBR is an essential radio portal for the expanding future jazz scene. Dig this cat’s tasty 12” jams. *Tomas Palermo* www.brokenbeatradio.com

LIKWID BISKIT INNER WAR People/UK/12

IG Culture and Kaidi Tatham are back under their Likwid Biskit moniker and engaging in some serious bruk stepping science. Heidi Vogel delivers a clear message (“Got to stop the war...”) to a soundtrack of shuffly sub-sonic basslines and twisted keys. An instant classic! Watch for the Herbs & Spices 12” on Co-Op and the full LP dropping any minute. *Argo*

DEL ALMA Amalgama/PTR/CD

The Amalgama cats have been linking some of the world’s hottest broken beat producers with the local talent in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The result is a perfect marriage of deep techno sounds, mad basslines and raw Latin percussion. Next-level bizniz from the likes of Afrikan Sciences, Titonton, Akimatize, Surra and Rojas. Watch for Amalgama in 2006! *Argo*

FIRECRACKER EP #2 Firecracker/UK/10

Linkwood delivers an essential dancefloor banger with “What’s Up With the Underground?” It’s a no-mes-sin’ jazz cut-up full of pounding pianos, heavy brass and hard-hitting beats. The 10” comes with bonus beats and skits, as well as dope artwork and stickers. *Argo*

IVANA SANTILLI EVERLASTING Do Right/CAN/12

Canadian-bred, New York-based chanteuse Ivana Santilli’s ballad “Everlasting” trails along the down-beat path. Japanese DJ Mitsu The Beats, one of the dopest hip-hop producers of now, drops jazzy ambiance over trippy beats that seem to float effortlessly. Meanwhile, fellow Canadian producers Circle Research lighten the beats and let the groove do its thang, with Abdominal flowing rhymes without a hint of intrusion. *Velanche*

DEMOCUSTICO VAGA LUME Far Out/UK/7

Far Out kicks off its 7” series off with a new project produced by label stalwart, Roc Hunter. “Vaga Lume” is a warm and breezy composition with a bit of Brazil-meets-lounge, creating a longing for his summers past. Mauro Berman’s musicianship compliments wife Gabriela Geluda’s dreamy voice. *Velanche*

SYCLOPS THE FLY Tirk/UK/12

Maurice Fulton delivers a second dose of musical madness under the Syclops guise. Adopting the cutting-up-live-sessions approach previously worked by P’taah, Four Tet and Madlib, Fulton swaps his lauded floor-filling tendencies for something more cerebral. The boundary-blurring tracks chug, swell, soar and sweep in a collage of sounds that probably won’t get peak-time DJ play but should most definitely tickle

your fancy. *Franz Carr*

OWUSU & HANIBAL DELERIUM REMIXES Ubiquity/US/12

Heads from Berlin to LA have been nodding to the Sa-Ra-ish soul cut “Delerium” for about eight months with out letting up. This Danish duo’s crunchy hit gets remixed by Sweden’s raw kids Up Hygh and Morgan Geist. UH, whose production touch shares sensibilities with J-Dilla and PPP, offers a punchy, hand-clapping rub. Geist, meanwhile, dusts off vintage drum machines to create a Yaz-style fantasia. *Derek Grey*

THE BEAUTY ROOM DON’T YOU KNOW New Religion/NETH/10

The Beauty Room is producer Kirk Degiorgio’s new project, featuring vocalist Jinadu covering Jan Hammer’s “Don’t You Know,” a Steely Dan-style mellow soul-funk nugget. Hefner (Lee Jones) steps away from his own sedate musical persona for a mid-tempo boogie mix flush with rhythmic twists. *Tomas Palermo*

HINT TREMMUH EP Tru Thoughts/UK/12

These six impressive upbeat broken dance tracks make for a hearty EP. “Hint” gets raw and rude with buzzing-hornet *funky* analog bass stabs and ‘nuff scattered percussion. Blink and you’ll miss the wicked Afro-soul/funk cut “Got A Pulse.” A-class music! *Hector Cedillo*



REGGAE REWIND BY ROSS HOGG

THE HEARSAY AND DOWNLOW ON DANCEHALL, DUB, ROOTS AND LOVERS ROCK

Now that **Sizzla Kalonji** has signed with Damon Dash Music Group, will dancehall experience a tidal wave of new fans? It’s entirely possible. Fortunately for the latecomers, the genre appears to be in a throwback period, with several excellent re-licks of old riddims and new tunes that take their cues from the past.

Elephant Man is still enjoying incredible success with “Willie Bounce” (Q45), an ode to the late **Mr. Bogle’s** lasting influence. It’s a remake of Gloria Gaynor’s “I Will Survive” that, despite all odds, works. Not to be outdone, **Vybz Kartel** is getting forwards with his new tune “Charmony” (Don Corleon) over a reworking of “Axel’s Theme” from *Beverly Hills Cop*. Somehow, both Vybz and Ele manage to pull off both without a hint of irony—no small feat, considering the original songs in question. The duo is also riding high on the new **Hello Moto** riddim (H2O Productions), with Vybz on the title track, Ele on “Promise,” and Beenie Man with a top-notch update of **Delroy Wilson’s** “Dancing Mood.”

Dancehall’s most vaunted production team, **Steely & Clevie**, returns to classic form with a few new riddims. **Old Truck** is reminiscent of early ‘90s hits like **Shabba Ranks’** “Ting A Ling” and features standout cuts from **Mr. Vegas**, **Buju Banton**, **Hawkeye** and more. The production dynamo also recently released **Handle**, a riddim based on the **Heptones’** classic “I Hold The Handle” with a new **Ninjaman** tune (“Last Night”) and a combination from **Beenie Man and U Roy** (“Concept of Life”).

Several all-time bashment favorites are being revisited too. **Sly & Robbie** return with a re-lick of the classic **Bam Bam**, made famous by Chaka Demus and Pliers’ international smash “Murder



POP ON TRIAL BY MARIA SCIARRINO AND SARA SHERR

DANCING OUR WAY THROUGH THE INDIE POP AISLES IN RECORD STORE HEAVEN.

January might be the best time of the year, if I can overlook the brutal East Coast cold for a brief moment. When else do you encounter such a giddy, clean slate feeling, even when nursing a nasty New Year’s hangover? Moreover, when else can you reflect on the past year without the guilt? Since the season is upon us, allow me to indulge in the moment.

These bands could be your life: **The Constantines**, **Oxford Collapse**, **Spoon**. Well, they were mine for the past year—I’m fairly positive records by these three artists barely left my side. **The Cons’** new album *Tournament of Hearts* (Sub Pop) finds the band moving away from the protoelectric post-punk stylings of their first two releases, swapping it for songs that resonate with a smoky allure. This might be due in part to the band’s moonlighting as a Neil Young cover band called **Horsey Craze**, but then again, maybe it has more to do with getting older, getting mellow and a desire to stretch new creative muscles. Take your pick. Horsey Craze has plans to release a split 12” with **The Unintended** on Toronto’s BlueFog label sometime in the near future.

Spoon has two brand-new singles out—the iTunes-only “My First Time Volume 3” and the **Merge Records**-issued “Sister Jack”—and they’re both great. “My First Time” is full of taut and sparse guitar riffs wrapped around a good backbeat; if you’re a fan of “I Turn My Camera On,” you’ll adore this track. “Sunday Morning, Wednesday Night” acts as a nice counterpart to the single’s remix of “ITMCO” (done by **John McEntire** of Tortoise fame), enveloped in lo-fi warmth and guitar overdubs.

Long before the post-punk revival of this millennium was ensuring the speedy death of irony, groups such as **The Embarrassment**, **The Feelies**

She Wrote.” This time around, **Bounty Killer and Bunny Rugs** team up on “Down In the Ghetto” and Sugar Roy and Conrad Crystal co-blaze a remake of Sly & Robbie’s own “Don’t Stop The Music.” But one of the biggest riddims out a road right now is **Baddis Ting** (produced by **Richard “Shams” Browne**), an updated version of 1998’s **Baddis**, which helped launch Red Rat’s career with “Cyaan Sleep.” **Mr. Vegas** and **Mr. Lexx** combined over this riddim to hit number one with “Taxi Fare.”

On the roots side of things, **Basque Dub Foundation** offers **Fade Away** (Heartical), a beautiful version of the Junior Byles hit, complete with melodica riffs and vocals from **Mykal Roze**, **Ranking Joe** and **Wayne Smith**. And 10-year-old sensation **QQ**, whose “Poverty” on the **Spiritual War** riddim is still charting; released “Better Must Come,” the title cut to a new binghi riddim. But one of my favorite records as of late has to be **Kiprich’s** “The Letter” (VP), his follow-up up to “Telephone Ting,” a cautionary tale of infidelity in the technological age. This time, he forgoes the use of the cellular (broken by his wife in the previous song) and takes it back to the pen and the pad. Not since Lady Saw’s “Give Me The Reason” has so country a song enjoyed such success. But the joy of “The Letter” is doubled by its counteraction tune, “Return To Sender” by **Lady G** (G String Production), wherein said mash notes are returned only to be read by his wife, played perfectly by Lady G herself.



Ranking Joe



Golden Ball



Spoon



Oxford Collapse



LUCKY 13
BY TOPH ONE

TophOne's mix CD *Live Loud & Dirty* is available at www.fabric8.com/redwine. Hear him every Wednesday at the RedWine Social at Dalva in SF.



James F!@\$%^ Friedman



Aceyalone



Tha Alkaholiks



Feloniou\$

So there I was on my bike, waiting for the light to turn green, totally ignoring the cop who sits at the intersection that I pass two or three times a day, when it hit me—why do I gotta be such a prick? I mean, I try to be positive, but there are certain people who just irk me at first sight: cops, Dodger fans, Republicans, smokers...It really is true that it takes more muscles to frown than to smile, and I'm getting awfully tired of that tough-guy headache. I just wanna wave at everybody and eat red Jello in the sun. Is that so bad? Is 35 too young for a mid-life crisis? OK, when you catch me hugging hippies and *not* disturbing my neighbors with High on Fire *really* loud at 4 a.m., you can take me out and shoot me, but in the meantime, I'm gonna smile at that cop and try to be a happier fellow.

1) THA ALKAHOLIKS FIREWATER

(Koch/US/CD) If this is truly Tha 'Liks last call, then I may as well join a monastery and devote my life to something else. But *damn*, this shit is on point all the way! After 12 years of absolute West Coast party classics, these guys are going out on top of their game and, as AC/DC says, "We salute you!"

2) JAMES F!@\$%^ FRIEDMAN GO COMMANDO

(Defend/US/CD) Fuck the monastery, that was just crazy talk. I want to get on the bus that James is on and see what the hell that's all about. This shit is white *hot*.

3) Q.P.E. "GENTRIFIED"

(theAgriculture/US/CD) Imagine your ears as sausage wrapped up inside a warm pancake, awaiting a rub of butter and a slow cascade of sweet, warm syrup all on a lovely spring morning.

4) DOWN TO THE BONE "ANGEL BABY (DAZ-I-KUE'S DUB VOX REMIX)"

(Narada Jazz/US/12) If I had a cat, it would be scared of me right now—prancing around my living room like some deranged Mick Jagger at this unseemly hour of the day, all amped up on green tea and Daz-I-Kue's ass-slapping, bass-throbbing funk. Here, kitty!

5) FELONIOUS "COMING SOON"

(Trainingslager/GER/7) San Francisco's multi-talented hip-hop band Felonious always comes correct—from their live shows to beatboxing, theatre and dance—they fully encompass the culture. This single shows them in fine form, on the solid J5 funk vibe, for those who know.

6) COUNTERFLOW

(US/label) I'll just make you a mixtape: Basic Vocab "I Ain't Your Door," Jazze Pha & Cee-Lo "Happy Hour," De Loach "Labor of Love," Seven Star "The Philosophy of Letting Go (Foex Remix)," Dave Ghetto "Spread the Light"—all reppin' the Southeast United States just fine and dandy.

7) MR. MELODY AND RIDER SHAFIQUE "SUNNY DAYS"

(Mouthwatering/SWT/12) A singer and MC with the Pressure Drop crew, these cats tear shit up over two thundering, dubwise beats courtesy of Filewile and P.D.

8) SPANK POPS "POPULATE"

(NatAural High/US/12) New Bay anthems to bounce from Haight to Telegraph up Highway 80 to Vallejo. Sick-ass production from DJ Natural, Ambush and Jern Eye (Lunar Heights) provides the perfect foundation for Spank to roll out his considerable mic skills. Keep an eye on this label.

9) ANNIE "THE WEDDING"

(!K7/US/12) This could be the soundtrack for *Vice Magazine's* "Do's" page—all fun and sexy and hopelessly hip.

10) ACEYALONE MAGNIFICENT CITY

(Project Blowed/Decon/US/CD) With RJD2 behind the boards, Acey drops maybe the finest record of his illustrious career. "All For You," "Supahero" and the lead-off single "Fire" show these two greats in perfect sync and top form.

11) GUMUNA "EP 01"

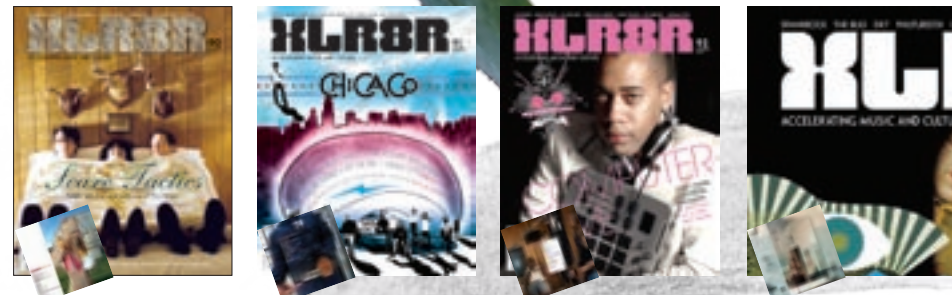
(Ode Music/JPN/12EP) "Kido" and "Tandori Wolf Girl" are jazzy downtempo numbers, the kind which one never really hears anymore, while "Turtle Trax" and "Rhythm So Silence" melt into liquid sunshine like something on Function8 or theAgriculture. Find it in the Warm Fuzzy section of your local record shop.

12) NEZBEAT "FADE AWAY TO SILENCE"

(Dekagon/US/7) Good shit from Kansas hip-hop producer Nezbeat, who's also behind much of Mac Lethal's upcoming Rhymesayers full-length.

LUCKY 13) DRUNKEN MONKEY "DYNAMITE SOUL"

(Splintered Tree/US/demo) Mutant disco-soul from the same tree that gave us Thom Bullock, Gavin Hardkiss (a frequent collaborator) and Q-Burn's Abstract Message. Somebody please sign this genius and make him famous and very, very wealthy.



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"YOU ONLY HAVE ONE POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP WITH MICROSOFT: YOU GET FUCKED."

Coldcut: Jon More (left) and Matt Black

IN THE STUDIO COLDCUT

ELECTRONIC MUSIC'S CUT 'N' PASTE REVOLUTIONARIES GET CANDID.
WORDS: SCOTT THILL PHOTO: STEVE DOUBLE

Ever since their infamous remix of Eric B. and Rakim's classic "Paid in Full" mashed no-nonsense street rap, Ofra Haza's Israeli chants and instructional Decca records like *A Journey Into Stereo Sound* into a future blueprint for electronic music, the DJ duo of Matt Black on Jon Moore—otherwise known as Coldcut—has only become more notorious and productive. Along the way, they founded one of indie whatever's most enduring labels, Ninja Tune, and created a revolutionary audiovisual editing software called VJAMM, which is now in its third version and doing just fine, thanks. As Black describes below, the two DJs are heavily invested in the future of montage art, especially when it can be sonically and visually freaked on either their user-friendly software app, Ableton Live or Nuendo; they employed the latter to build *Sound Mirror's* progressive political beatscapes. Plus, with guest stars like Jon Spencer, Mike Ladd and Saul Williams on board, they needed all the technical help they could get...as long as it came from someone else besides Microsoft, that is.

WHAT KIND OF GEAR DID YOU USE TO MAKE SOUND MIRRORS?

Matt Black: We've more or less relied on Nuendo and Ableton Live for everything. Lately, I'm finding that Ableton Live pretty much does everything we want. I would encourage anyone interested in making electronic music to check it out. It has that depth and ease-of-use that all great programs have. And it's very much in the soul of Coldcut's evolution of loop-based engines and real-time collage. It was used extensively on the album and will be used in our live shows.

ARE YOU A GEAR JUNKIE?

I am kind of a gear junkie. And I'm not convinced that it's such a great strategy in the end. In the past, I lusted after the gear that the rich kids had, and then once we made some money I bought more than I could ever learn to use. And it stayed in the fucking attic. Since then, I've come to realize that I've spent a lot of time debugging gadgets for the companies that released them.

YOU'RE PAYING TO WORK OUT THEIR PROBLEMS.

Right. As you get older, time becomes more and more valuable. So I leave the debugging to the younger bloods that have got to have the latest phone, box or whatever. I'll stick with Ableton Live for now, although my favorite toy of the moment is the Trigger Finger from M-Audio. It's wicked; I can hook it up to Ableton and it's like a virtual MPC.

HOW ABOUT SOFTWARE?

We're on Sony's Vegas for video editing and SoundForge for audio editing. Those are two good, solid, professional programs we've been using for years now, and they just keep getting better.

HOW DID YOU START VJAMM?

Years ago, New York's Emergency Broadcast Network had a MIDI-controlled audiovisual sample program for the Mac, and I was like, "I want one of those. Maybe we'll have to build one ourselves." So I met up with Camart and commissioned them to build one for Coldcut. Together we developed a live show that could pretty much pack an entire audiovisual performance—using VJAMM as the core engine on laptop PCs—into three flight cases. Over the years, it's evolved into much more, and I think with VJAMM3 we're in a position to make a slightly bigger splash.

IS COLDCUT ENDORSED BY ANYONE RIGHT NOW?

Nope. If you've got any suggestions, we're flexible people.

IS IT THAT NO ONE'S COME CALLING, OR IS IT JUST NOT PART OF YOUR PHILOSOPHY?

It's a bit of both. I think perhaps we've flown the alternative-anarchy flag quite high, and maybe that's put off some companies from approaching us. If Microsoft phoned us up and wanted to do something, I guess it would depend. They have a reputation, of course. You only have one possible relationship with Microsoft: you get fucked.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG PRODUCERS AND DJS?

Examine yourself. Don't give away your power by blaming other people for how shitty the situation is. For me, the joy of making something is the highest priority. Making money from it comes second. Like Ninja Tune's slogan says, "Careful with the cash, crazy with the music."

Sound Mirrors is out January 19 on Ninja Tune. www.coldcut.net



In Coldcut's studio (clockwise from above: M-Audio Trigger Finger, Ableton Live screenshot, VJamm3, Nuendo, Vegas 6, Sound Forge screenshot)

2006 WINTER NAMM PREVIEW

A GUIDE TO THE STUDIO GEAR YOU'LL BE SELLING YOUR RECORD COLLECTION FOR IN 2006. WORDS: TOMAS PALERMO AND ROB GEARY



IK MULTIMEDIA AMPLITUDE 2.0 SOFTWARE/STOMP IO FOOT CONTROLLER

\$399 (AT2); STOMP PRICE NOT AVAILABLE AT PRESS TIME. WWW.AMPLITUDE.COM
Kick out the jams, literally, with this guitar amp-modeling software and USB foot controller combo. Software includes FX plug-ins and a crazy amount of amps, heads and mic settings, all stomppable via its USB pedal.



PIONEER DJ'S SOFTWARE

\$249; WWW.PIONEERDJ.COM
Love your CDJ's but wanna go laptop? Use Pioneer's DJS software for PCs (sorry Mac fans!). You'll get auto mixing, BPM synchronization and eight killer effects (delay, echo, filter, flanger, etc.). Also has QWERTY keyboard assignability and a ripping function for converting CD, line input, signals and WAV files to MP3.



BEHRINGER F-CONTROL AUDIO FCA202 FIREWIRE INTERFACE

\$99.99; WWW.BEHRINGER.COM
Speed rules, so jump in the digital fast lane with this FireWire interface featuring stereo 24-bit in/outputs and a headphone output with dedicated volume control. It comes bundled with podcast/digital DJ/music production software Ableton Live Lite 4 and Audacity audio software.



MACKIE D2 FIREWIRE DJ MIXER

\$779.99; WWW.MACKIE.COM
Need ease? Record vinyl from your decks straight into your Mac or PC with this FireWire two-channel DJ mixer. Features a butter-smooth optical crossfader, Mackie-designed mic and turntable preamps for maximum volume and an auto-switching power supply—just plug-in and spin anywhere on Earth.

SKULLCANDY SKULLCRUSHER HEADPHONES

\$69.95; WWW.SKULLCANDY.COM
There's nothing subtle about Skullcrusher headphones. These massive earpieces are the headphone equivalent of a giant trunk amp: they make LCD Soundsystem sound like David Banner and David Banner sound like the apocalypse.



MUSTEK PVR H-160 MEDIA PLAYER

\$499; WWW.MUSTEK.COM
Irked by iPod? Grab Mustek's device with a spacious 60GB drive that can hold 180 hours of full-motion video, 15,000 MP3s and thousands of digital photos. Its unique software converter allows television programs and movies to be recorded directly from a TV, VCR, DVD or cable/satellite signal into MPEG4—no PC required. Holla!

ALIENWARE CE-IV DIGITAL AUDIO PLAYERS

PRICE NOT AVAILABLE AT PRESS TIME; WWW.ALIENWARE.COM
Get abducted by these galactically cool media players, available in 512 or 1GB sizes. Great for videogames or music, these both come with a memory expansion slot, FM tuner, noise-reduction earbuds and—for that top-geek cache—an alien head with glowing eyes.



E-MU XBOARD 25 USB/MIDI CONTROLLER

\$199; WWW.EMU.COM
With more knobs than a British soccer pub (16 total controllers), the Xboard 25 sports velocity-sensitive keys and a Proteus X LE Module with over 1,000 sounds, and it can run on USB or batteries.



EDIROL MA-1EX USB POWERED SPEAKERS

\$80; WWW.EDIROL.COM
Cuter than Paris Hilton's lapdogs, you could mix down a track in a phone booth with these small, powerful USB-powered speakers that feature a bass enhancer, 1/8" headphone jack and S/P DIF output.



M-AUDIO PODCAST FACTORY BUNDLE

\$179.95; WWW.M-AUDIO.COM
Be heard! M-Audio's Podcast Factory is the soup-to-nuts podcast creation package, including a broadcast microphone, USB audio interface and Ableton Live Lite, so you can stop recording podcasts into your ancient reel-to-reel recorder.



ULTIMATE SOUND BANK ETHNIC BOOMBOX SOUND LIBRARY

\$99; WWW.ULTIMATESOUNDBANK.COM
Achieve world peace with this 4GB virtual instrument set of exclusive GarageBand Apple Loops. Pluck or play 100 instruments from Africa, Asia, The Balkans, Indonesia and Spain including shakuhachi, jube, bouzouki, saz, luth and a virtual UN of exotic sounds.



FM3 BUDDHA MACHINE TONE GENERATOR

MSRP: \$23; WWW.FORCEEXPOSURE.COM, WWW.STAALPLAAT.COM
The **Buddha Machine** is so simple and primitive—it is nothing more than a music box—and yet it already generated a worldwide cult following. Beijing experimentalists **FM3** released this curiosity last year, allowing users to listen to nine built-in loops of ambient synth tones emitted from a plastic, cigarette-sized box. The machine is inspired by sound boxes that play prayers and chants, sold at Chinese Buddhist temples. Included with the AA-battery powered device are a headphone jack and an A/C adapter, but the music is best heard through the machine's tiny, lo-fi speaker, which allows you to appreciate the great beauty before it vaporizes. Buddha's mystique is welcome in a time when the MP3 player has made so much music disposable. *Cameron Macdonald*



SAMSON RUBICON 6A AND RESOLV 40A ACTIVE STUDIO MONITORS

MSRP: \$560 (RUBICON, PAIR), \$200 (40A, PAIR); WWW.SAMSONTECH.COM
Samson has been slowly inching its way into the upper echelons of studio sound, and these active monitors are living proof. The **Samson Resolv 40A**'s are extraordinarily desktop-friendly (6.5" x 9.75" x 7.5" to be exact), churning out a solid 50 watts of sound for entry-level beat makers (though only via RCA inputs). The **Samson Rubicons** up the ante for the slightly more serious producer. Using a special high-performance ribbon tweeter to do their thang, the Rubicons may be the best price/performance ratio on the active monitors market today. Both speakers are worth a lengthy listen. *Evan Shamon*



PROPELLERHEAD REASON DRUM KIT 2.0 SOUND LIBRARY

MSRP: \$129; WWW.PROPELLERHEADS.SE
Reason's impressive new Combinator device strikes again—this time with a little bit of boom-bap, as **Drum Kits 2** gives you multi-sampled, recallable, multi-output drums. All of the sounds were captured at multiple velocity levels using various microphones; by adjusting the levels of the Close, Overhead and Ambience mics, you can fully shape and control the sound of your drums. Several name producers and engineers were even asked to use Drum Kits 2 and Reason's effects to reproduce their signature sounds—and the rest, young padawan, is up to you. *Evan Shamon*



LAPTOP MUSIC POWER! THE COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

MSRP: \$34.99; WWW.COURSEPTR.COM
Can you GarageBand amateurs create amazing tracks overnight? Probably not. But with producer and researcher John von Seggern breaking down digital composition and performance techniques in **Laptop Music Power!**, you might get there quicker. Von Seggern's quintessential guidebook compares and contrasts nearly every facet of choosing a Mac or PC, selecting digital interfaces and controllers and using software from Ableton Live to Logic. *Laptop* also explores DJ realms, presenting tactics to employ your machine in live performance via features on Traktor DJ Studio and Virtual DJ, amongst others. *Laptop Music Power!* is packed with so much detail, any producer, DJ or student will have something to reference as technology evolves. *Fred Miketa*

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NATIVE INSTRUMENTS TRAKTOR 3 DJ SOFTWARE

MSRP: \$279, WWW.NATIVE-INSTRUMENTS.COM

Upgrading from Traktor DJ mixing software version 2.6 to 3.0 is like trading in your used '72 Buick Skylark for a new Toyota Prius. If the former was bulky, gas-guzzling and unreliable, the latter is sleek, packed with features and efficient. **Native Instruments Traktor 3** is a vast improvement of functionality, file management and ease of use, and may convince some who jumped ship for Serato to reconsider. Furthermore, like the Serato/Rane partnership, NI has modeled Traktor 3.0's software interface after the amazing Allen & Heath Xone 92 mixer, with similar EQ knobs and built-in effects. Choose between two- or four-deck modes—controllable via any MIDI controller or Stanton Final Scratch—or configure tons of mouse settings (for stand-alone non-FS users like me). You can also switch between EQ set-ups (fewer or more) and cue files more rapidly than with 2.6. The myriad options are better viewed in full-screen mode or on a larger monitor, and using a hardware interface is recommended. Overall, 3.0 is a classy, smooth ride. *Tomas Palermo*



ETYMOTIC ER-4 MICROPRO EARPHONES

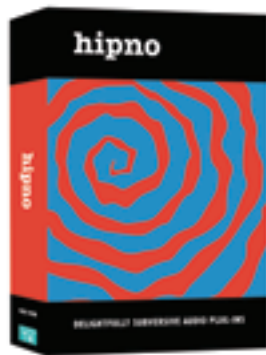
MSRP: \$330, WWW.ETYMOTIC.COM

Audiophile headphones are normally gigantic, head-crushing affairs that kill dreams of moving anywhere but the couch while listening. **Etymotic's ER-4** earphones are the audiophile's version of portable earbuds, inserting deep into your ears to deliver top-flight sound from any portable player. In fact, they sound so good that they will often initially sound wrong to ears trained on throwaway 'phones—and, unlike the cheapies, they require some fitting to get right. Once you've picked out the right plugs, they're lightweight, sound awesome and naturally block out plenty of sound—you'll never go back. *Rob Geary*

OAKLEY THUMP 2 MP3 PLAYER

MSRP: \$449, WWW.OAKLEY.COM

Looks like you've got another reason to wear your sunglasses at night. Charge up your **Oakley THUMP 2** shades via USB (iPodders may roll their eyes at the non-FireWire transfer speeds but it's not that bad), drag and drop up to 1GB of files (MP3, WMA, WAV, AAC) and head outside to enjoy your tunes in stealth mode. The nearly wireless, lightweight and easily adjustable ear buds and intuitive controls make the THUMP 2's a solid hit. While Oakley's wearable music device may not have the pop cultural cachet of those white earbuds, for convenience and ease of use, these sunglasses give Steve Jobs' favorite toy a run for its money—plus, you can't get caught staring. *Peter Nicholson*



CYCLING '74 HIPNO PLUG-IN SOFTWARE

MSRP: \$199, WWW.CYCLING74.COM

The sound manipulation geniuses at Cycling '74 have teamed up with interface designers Electrotap to create **Hipno**, a mighty collection of radical plug-ins that ranges from pitch-shifting effects to granular and spectral processing. Producers beware: despite the allure and simplicity of the Hipnoscope (the software's KAOSS Pad-like interface), Hipno is an advanced plug-in set. Without using care, you may easily find yourself with an earful of hellish digital distortion. Designed for producers who've been around the block, you better be ready to explore complex delay settings, reverb textures and in-depth audio freakouts. *Marc Kate*



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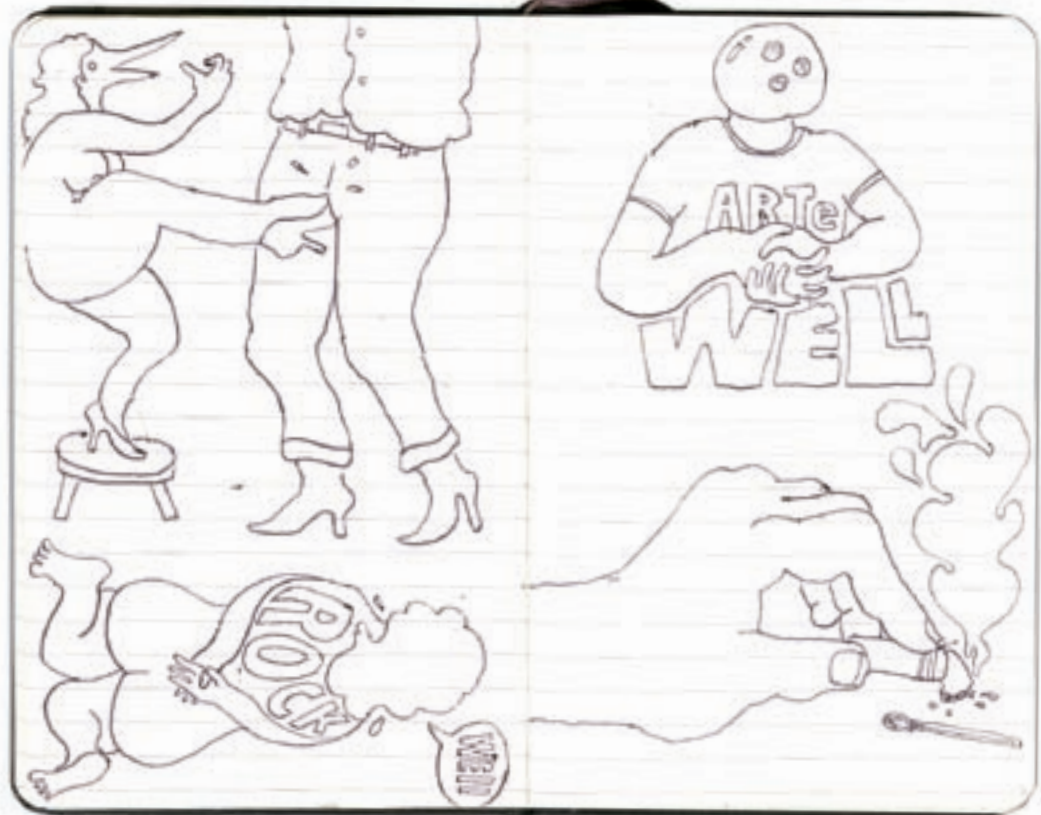
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Nashville offers federal financial aid for those who qualify
New York City and Nashville Accredited by The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology

VIS-ED: PARRA

Amsterdam's most wanted keeps himself in line.

WORDS: VIVIAN HOST IMAGES: PARRA



ABOVE:
Sketchbook excerpt 2005
RIGHT:
Exclusive piece for
XLR8R Vis-Ed

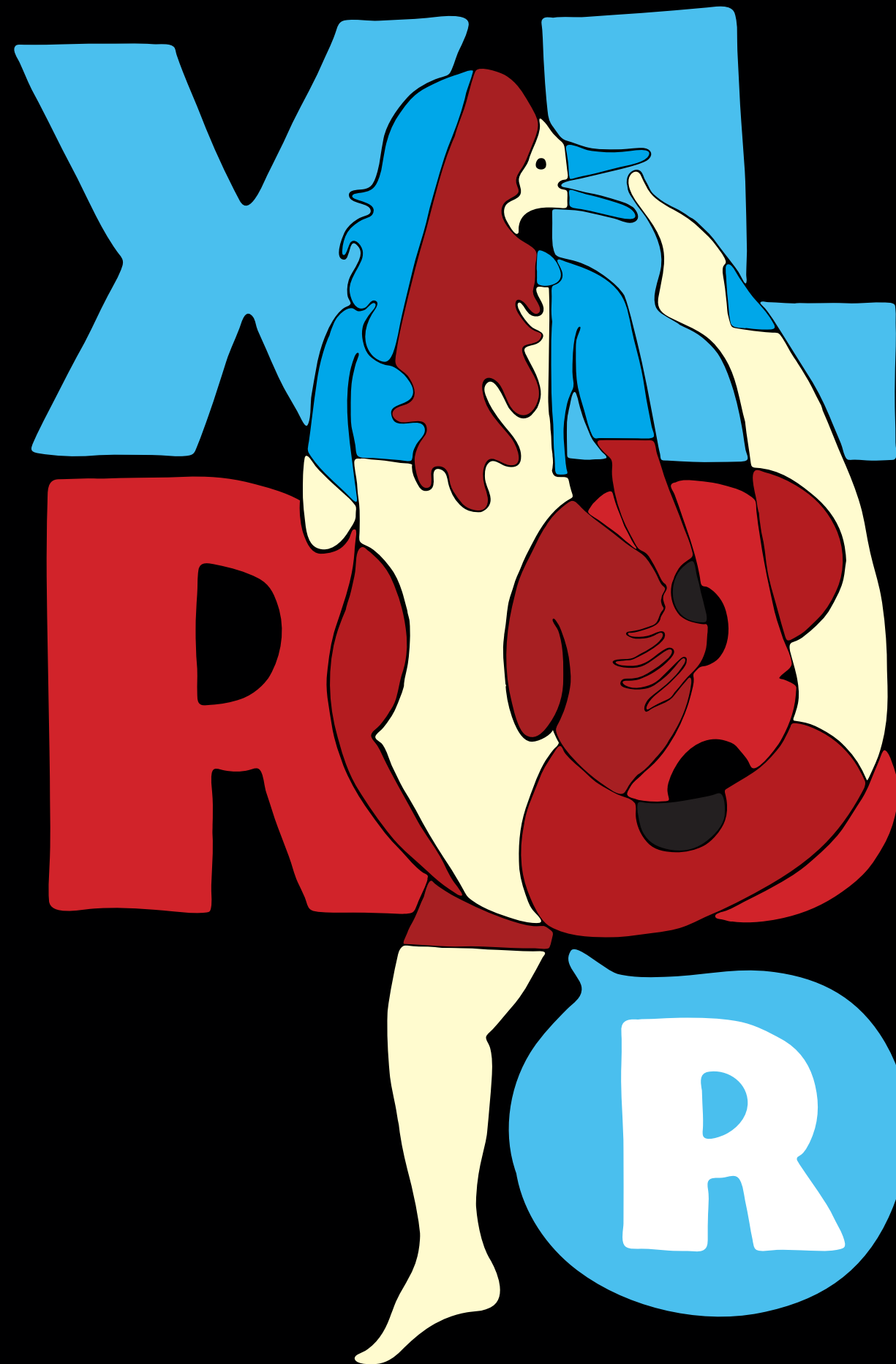
To find Parra, you first have to find an 18-letter street: Nieuwsijdsvoorburch. Hang a left and look for the sneaker freaks talking outside the Patta store on their high-tech Japanese cell phones. Go inside, past Gee caressing some limited edition Nikes and the sounds of Mr. Wix booming hip-hop in a backroom studio, up some narrow stairs and into a room cluttered with boxes and boxes of shoes, posters, a discarded CPU and a clothing rack booming with the purple and green t-shirts of Parra's four-year-old Rockwell clothing line. Sitting in the corner—surrounded by a to-do list, the new Three 6 Mafia CD and a PC with a giant Mac monitor—you'll find all 5' 9" of the kinetic, compact visual artist born Pieter Janssen.

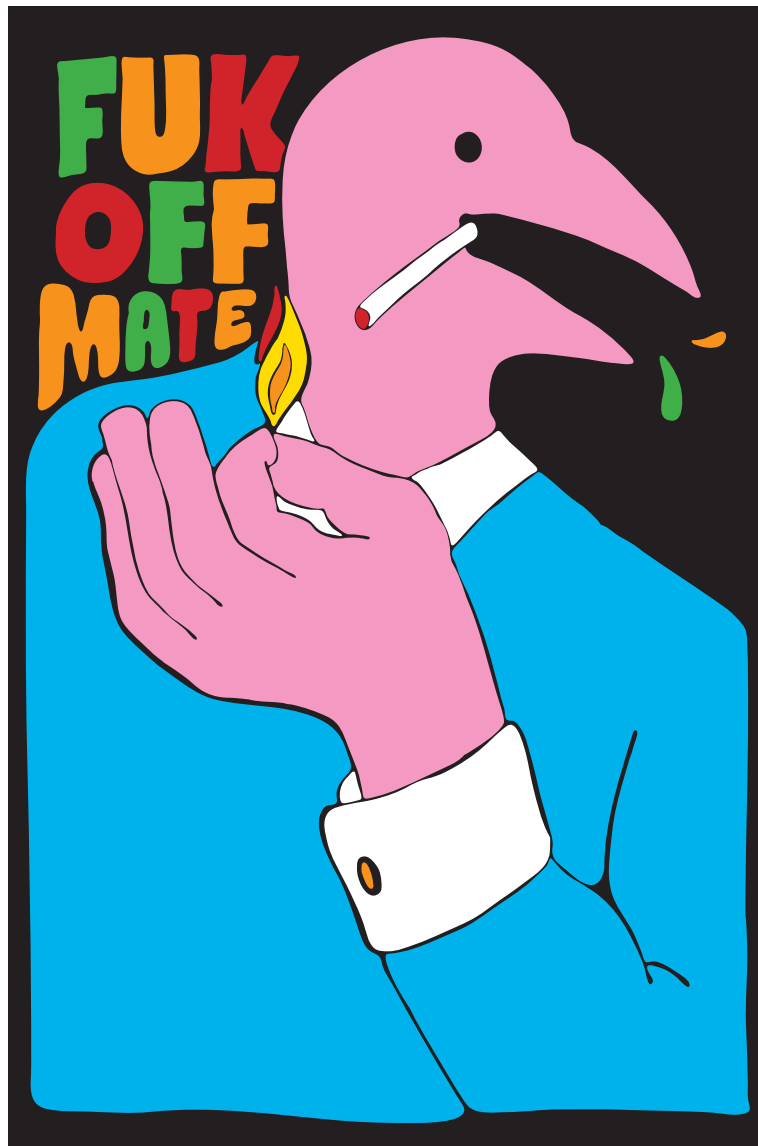
Here on the third floor is where Parra has developed his distinctive visual language: a mix of hand-drawn fonts dripping with personality, eye-catching color combos, strange bird-like characters and lately, when the mood strikes, big tits and asses. It's hard to turn a corner in Amsterdam

without seeing something he's done, whether it's the logo for the Kids Love Wax record store, a deck for Dutch skate company Color Blind, or one of the hundreds of cheeky posters and flyers he creates for clubs like Jimmy Woo and Bitterzoet (where you can often find him having an after-work beer...or five).

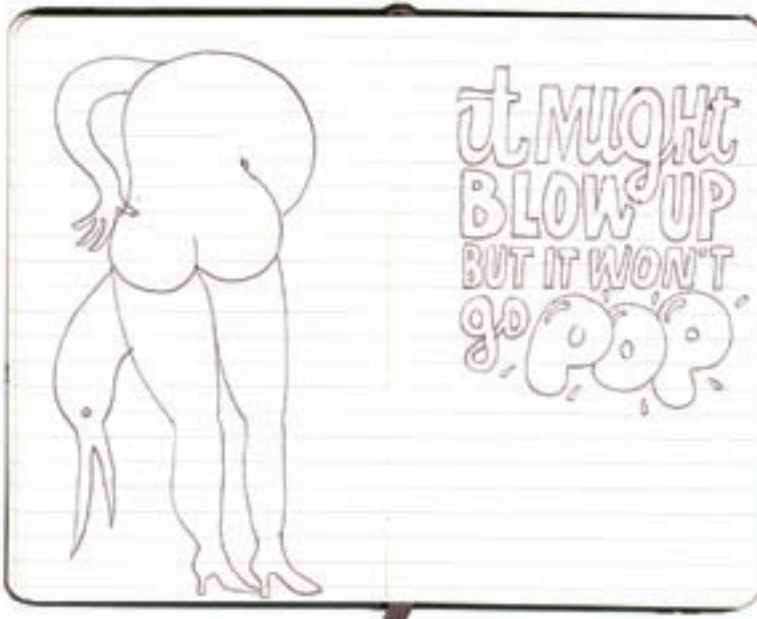
Parra's loaned his classy style to corporate projects for Ben & Jerry's and Foot Locker, but he wisely uses the money to fund pet projects like making custom Vans and releasing weird '60s loops and MPC hip-hop beats on his Records van Rockwell EPs. And with all this brewing, he still recently found time to rock the cover of *Flaunt* magazine, the flyer for Carl Craig's Demon Days party and design the new season for Rockwell. We asked this goofy-footed, short-attention-spanned, girls-and-typography-obsessed dude to tell us how he does it.

www.rockwellclothing.com, www.galleriesilo.nl/parra





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
 "Fuk Off Mate" 2005;
 Leather padded pillow 2005;
 Sketchbook excerpt 2005



What was your childhood like?

My childhood was very nice. I lived with my father who is a painter and sculptor (check his stuff at www.galleriesilo.nl). I could always do what I wanted, everything but being bored—he did not like that. We made my first skateboard together out of some wooden board that was lying in the garden for a while and the trucks on a pair of rollerskates. It broke in about five minutes. We lived in a super small village, actually in about five of them—he always moved after about three years, then he would find a cheap house in the country with a barn or something and we started all over again. But I was never bored.

What was your favorite fashion look that you rocked growing up?

The purple, dumb, big Blind jeans and the striped polo on top, all XXXL—early '90s skate shit.

How did you get into graphic design?

I always skateboarded and that was a major influence: the magazines, the graphics, the clothes. I was [also] in a kind of a crappy high school that was about design and later, I got rejected from art school. I just waited until I could do an internship, then went to Amsterdam and worked at this tiny advertising company; the

boss liked my style of thinking and taught me the basics of computer graphic design and concept thinking for clients. I stayed with him for a year and went to work for myself. Gradually, I left the computer-based design alone and started drawing my fonts and layouts, then scanning them in and redrawing them in Illustrator. That's where my style formed. The first things I did solo were flyers and posters for my friends' various parties.

What are some of your favorite color combos ever?

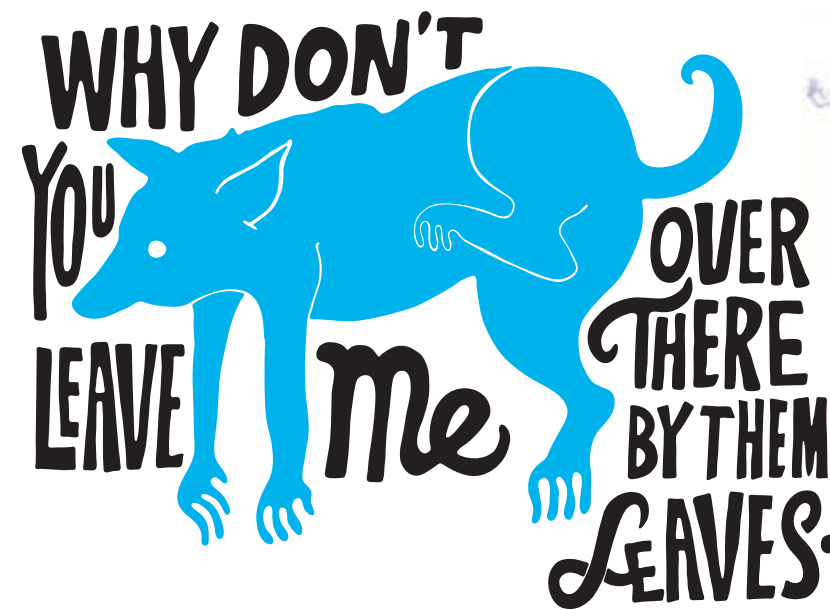
White and red, black and white, heather grey and navy.

What three CDs are you listening to most right now?

Golden Dawn *Powerplant* (Sunspots), Aardvarck (Rednose District) *Cult Copy* (Rushhour) and Abba *Voulez-Vous* (Polydor)

You did some orange, blue and white Nike Air Max that were hot but never came out. What happened?

I did them myself. The colorway was inspired by the plastic bags of an Amsterdam supermarket called Albert Heijn, then those idiots changed the colorways of their bags and logo. I wanted to sell the orange/blue Air Max in plastic bags on the street and stuff. That was not gonna happen anymore so the joke was lost



and I decided to go with plan B. Nike called me three weeks ago saying that they were still thinking about releasing the [Albert Heijn Air Max], so who knows?

Humor is really important to your work. What are some things you find funny?

I find people funny—the way they act and maneuver themselves through life—and nearly all animals make me smile.

What's your favorite saying in Dutch?

Ouwe pik ouwe pijp! It means something like "What's up you old fucker," but it in a nice way.

What's a typical day like for you?

Wake up around 11 a.m., shower, watch some crappy TV, breakfast somewhere in the city. Arrive at the studio, check mail, stress the fuck out because I'm not doing what I should do and start drawing and scanning and drawing. A few calls here and there, chill downstairs with the guys from Patta (big up Gee, Edson, Mr. Wix and Benny!), get some dinner around six, draw some more 'til about eight or nine. Then go out for a drink or a skate or combined. Try calling a girl to spend the night with or cruise

home on my own. Go to bed too late and wake up around 11 to start again...

Have you ever had to do a corporate commission that you didn't like?

A few, but I find that no trouble. It's a part of creating your own freedom. You need to make some money to keep everything rollin' and a concession here and there is not the end of the world. Sometimes you can even make something crappy look good.

Why are you called Parra?

Edson from Patta called me that about six years ago because I asked him about five times if I was on the guestlist for some party. I had just moved to Amsterdam and I was trying to get the hang of things and calling five times for the list was not the thing to do. He found it funny and paranoid, so Parra stands for paranoid, but I don't agree with it...

What was the last thing you were really excited about?

Seriously, I get excited about stuff everyday, but yesterday it was about kickflippin' a quite high roadbarrier.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

LEFT:
 Custom Nike Air Max 2005;
 Cover for D'ran D'ran Dr'an
 EP 2005 [Ed's note: D'ran means
 "on it," as in "I got five on it,"
 in Dutch];
 "Jimmy Woo" type from sketch-
 book 2005;
 Drawing on hand 2005;
 Sketchbook drawing 2005;
 "Why Don't You Leave Me Over
 There By Them Leaves" 2005



"it's the joint"



"fa shaginaw"



"thizzin"

SLANG IT!

STREET DIALECTS INFORM MUSIC, UPGRADING OUR ILL COMMUNICATIONS.

WORDS: ERIC K. ARNOLD ILLUSTRATION: DAVID CLARK

"Err-body in the club gettin' tipsy/oh fuck that, just wine like a gypsy," commands Lady Sovereign on 2004's grime anthem "Random." Simultaneously referencing and rebuking the Down South patter of Chingy, the 18-year old MC phenomenon flips the script with a Jamaican colloquialism for dancing, before evoking the nomadic tribes known for palm reading and belly dancing. Her cockney accent provides the cherry on top, illustrating and illuminating the numerous cultural influences inherent in a typical rap verse, laden both with lyrical metaphor and copious usage of slang phrases.

Slang moves around a lot, just like the Roma people more commonly known as gypsies. Furthermore, its place in culture is perhaps second only to rhythm itself; just as music represents a language of coded tones and melodies, slang identifies regional and cultural mores as well as more widespread social phenomena.

Back in the day, old-school terms like "fresh," "dope" and "it's the joint" became not only ubiquitous to hip-hop culture but vital to the notion of the culture's universality as it traveled out of the Five Boroughs. As the genre spread overseas, and was embraced by non-English speaking peoples, slang terms became the bridge by which linguistic and cultural barriers were crossed.

The use of slang in music—obviously most prevalent in rap, but extant in other genres—is both trendy

and a prognosticator of trends; much of the jazz-identified hipster lingo is not only still circulating today, but has influenced subsequent musical genres, decades after the fact. Before turntablism existed as an artform, for example, King Pleasure shouted out "Mr. President of the DJ committee" on his vocalese version of "Jumpin' With Symphony Sid"—a stylistic ancestor of rap. Fast-forward to the '90s, when slang figured prominently in the Dignable Planets' aesthetic, a mixture of jazz-era terminology, Black Power ideology, hip-hop maxims and their own invented phrases ("swoon units," "creamy spics").

More recently, as popular Bay Area terms like "pop ya colla" and "fa shizzle" are being co-opted by everyone from commercially-viable artists to corporate executives, rappers E-40, Keak Da Sneak and Mistah F.A.B. are remixing the oral tradition by coming up with a succession of newer phrases. "Fa sho" begets "fa sheezy," which begets "fa shizzle," which in turn begets "fa shaginaw." This, however, is nothing new: in the '80s, UTFO's "Roxanne, Roxanne" and Jimmy Smith's "Double Dutch Bus" both drew from the children's playground language "Double Z" (i.e. "dizzo youzza sezsee the dizzouble dizzuch") for their wordplay—a practice revisited years later by Jay-Z on "Izza."

Similarly, in Jamaican soundssystem culture—a seminal influence on electronic music, hip-hop and sound engineering—the concept of "version-

ing" extends not only to musical riddims, but to vocabulary as well. Terms like "dubplate" and "drum & bass" have transcended reggae music to become widespread in many electronic genres, and both English and American MCs have been heavily influenced by Jamaican deejays.

You can also track the popularity of various controlled substances over time by the number of times they're referenced in music. Ravers in the late '80s might have been "sorted" listening to house and trance, while urban club kids these days are "thizzin'" to *hyphy* anthems by Mac Dre and The Team.

But while drug-identified phrases pop up in any youth-centric urban culture, not all regional slang is so readily accepted in other places. Southern "crunk" has been assimilated by NY crews like Dipset and Mobb Deep and replicated by West Coast producers like Rick Rock and Droop-E, yet slowed down ("chopped & screwed") mixtapes are practically unknown outside of the South and Midwest; similarly, few folks on the East or West Coasts have any idea what a "whodi" is.

By the same token, you can hear a fair amount of Americanisms (or Jamaicanisms, for that matter) in the lyrics of any UK rapper, but not too many US MCs are going around spitting UK terminology. While some of Lady Sov's more London-specific terms might throw non-UK listeners off, she's taken a step in the right slinguistic direction with her trademark "Cha-Ching"—a hip enough catchphrase to be used by almost anyone, anywhere in the world.

For more on this topic, check www.rapdict.org. Eric K. Arnold is a frequent XLR8R contributor and columnist for the East Bay Express.

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